

Plainfield 202 Middle School

Grading and Assessment

Guidance Document

What is the purpose of this initiative?

The purpose of the Grading and Assessment committee is to provide educators with grading criteria across the District, aligned with standards. The goal is that the guidance is clear, consistent, and equitable. Clarity, consistency, and equity in grading are the result of purposeful assessments that provide accurate information regarding learning and achievement, develop and encourage intrinsic motivation and nurture a continuing growth mindset. The focus of the initiative is to develop consistency in classroom practices across the seven middle schools. The initiative is an extension of the Purposeful Learning model implemented during the 18-19 and 19-20 school year. At the building level, teachers have begun to develop standard practices around a specific instructional model. Teachers are posting and referring to the *AWWH* model which includes an *Agenda, what are we learning? Why is it important? How do we know that students are successful? (success criteria)*

In most middle school classrooms across the District we have over 90% of teachers following this model. Teachers post and refer back to the model throughout teaching and learning. The purpose is to demonstrate *deliberate* standards based learning.

Teachers and administrators have examined our grading practices extensively for the past two years. We have examined what we do and how it

compares to what the research tells us about best practice. Middle school administrators went through professional development, teachers serve on the MS grading and assessment committee, and teachers across the district have gone through building level professional development on best practices for grading and assessment. We are currently in a position to provide guidance to all middle school teachers on expectations of research driven common practices.

What conclusions can we draw from the research?

Grades are communication. Grades must be accurate reports of evidence of student performance. Grades must be based on assessment of the publicly declared outcomes and curriculum. Once a student demonstrates full proficiency then they have demonstrated proficiency regardless of what point in the learning. Most recent evidence counts most in grading, so when a student retakes a test, it is the most recent grade that counts. Gradebooks should have standards not page numbers and assignments. The more you put formative things in the summative reports, the less accurate the picture is of the student's grade. Students can learn without grades but not without feedback. Whoever does the editing does the learning. There is minimal research to support percentage and letter grade correlation. The use of rubrics must be deliberate, meaning, they are evidence criteria based, and look for clear and consistent evidence.

Grades do not reflect student habits and behaviors. Student behaviors are not a reflection of their learning, they are influenced by factors that are often not managed within the school setting such as late work, failure to complete assigned work, participation, and grading based on completion.

Grades demonstrate mastery of content standards, in the form of both formative and summative. Practice is preparation for mastery, extra credit is not factored into overall grade, it does not demonstrate mastery of learning. Curving and averaging student grades is an inaccurate representation of student learning. Grades are criterion referenced and do not reflect student performance against others. Students are provided the opportunity to redo and retake assignments / assessments. Expectations will be set by individual teachers as to how the redo and retake is provided. Student demonstration of mastery may take multiple attempts. Examples of growth in mastery include a variety of assessments including ACT, SAT, CPA, MCAT, the Legal BAR. Group work is acceptable and collaborative learning is supported by research, however, group grades are not supported by research. Student achievement and mastery of standards is individualized. Teachers will have formative and summative assessments to accurately gauge student mastery, growth, and achievement. Formative assessment opportunities demonstrate where a student is in their current understanding and provide teachers with guidance on what should happen next. Formative assessment grades are part of the practice category. Feedback is essential to mastery. Students are provided with written or verbal feedback from the teacher and other students during practice in order for students to reach mastery. Timely feedback has been proven to support student growth and mastery and is encouraged as an ongoing practice in the middle school classroom.

What are the key components of our grading and assessment initiative?

Grading at the middle school level will fall into two categories, Practice (30%) and Assessment (70%). Our grading practices will reflect academic achievement, contain meaningful feedback, be honest, fair, transparent, credible, useful, and user friendly, be criterion referenced, align with the Plainfield 202 local curriculum and reflect consistency within content area, grade level, and schools

What about non-academic factors?

The grades that are reported will reflect student academic achievement. While non-academic factors may be highly valued and often contribute to student achievement, these factors will be communicated separately from an academic achievement grade. The following are examples of non-academic factors: Behavior (Attendance, Attitude, Punctuality, Effort, Preparedness), certain class participation (ex: how many times a student raises hand) Homework *based on completion*, tardy to school and class, student effort, and other evidence of student characteristics or habits.

How are grades going to be more consistent?

- Across the grade levels (6-8), content areas, and schools, grading expectations will be the same regardless of the teacher. The process for handling the use of the zero, late work, types of assessments, breakdown of grades, will be the same for each specific content by grade level.
- Students will be provided multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery of a skill.

- Through professional conversations and reflective practices around grading and assessment, teachers will support a more consistent grading system across the middle school level.
- Students and parents will be provided with an outline of the grading procedures for each class.
- Communication between teachers and the home will drive the success of the initiative, parents are encouraged to check online gradebook regularly.

What are the primary components used to calculate a grade?

- For students in grades 6 - 8, there are two main categories that contribute to a student grade, practice and assessment. 30 % of the student grade will be practice and 70% of the student grade will be assessment.

Practice

- Practice grades account for 30% of the grade for middle school students because it is *during the part of learning (formative) where the student may not have demonstrated mastery*. It is a grade based on the practice phase of learning and should not have too heavy an impact on the student grade. Practice includes any activity or lesson that previews, reviews, or supports current learning. Practice assessments include activities such as teacher observation of students while learning, homework, quizzes, rough drafts, peer editing, interactive notebook reviews, classroom activities.
- Practice may also include formative assessments, such as, but not limited to, science labs, weekly grammar activities, reading comprehension, problem solving, vocabulary checks, and exit slips. Homework is practice of

skills taught in class that day, however, it is not considered part of the graded practice. A comparison often found in the research is that of a basketball player. Prior to a game, players practice over and over shooting drills, passing drills, set plays for defense and offense. When errors or mis-steps are made in practice, it is not punitive. Coaches simply redirect the athletes on how to improve and the re-do opportunity during practice supports the player to be ready to perform at the highest of their ability during the game. We look at the practice category in the classroom as the opportunity to rehearse the skills necessary to be successful on the summative assessment. Student practice, receive timely, ongoing feedback from the classroom teacher and are not afraid to take risks and make mistakes during practice.

What will be included in the practice category?

- Practice is everything that is not a summative assessment. The different activities included in practice serve to provide immediate feedback to the teacher regarding student progress.
- Not every academic practice will be graded. Because these are used regularly the most important role of practice is *feedback*. Teachers will strive to give weight to assignments that demonstrate a students journey towards mastery within the practice category.
- This is not long and it is not formal. Practice is typically while the learning takes place.

- Grading homework solely on effort and completion is not included in the grade because it provides no feedback to help the student as they progress through their learning.
- Feedback for students during this part of learning *will show students what adjustments are still needed to demonstrate proficiency/mastery* such as further review and/or additional practice.
- For teachers, it may provide feedback indicating a need to change instructional strategies or to provide additional practice to students.

Assessment

- Summative Assessment grades account for 70% of the grade for middle school students.
- According to research, there are three types of assessments:
 - Diagnostic: Assessment at the beginning of learning, takes place prior to instruction, designed to determine student knowledge and skill prior to learning in order to identify student needs. Diagnostic assessment is *ungraded*.
 - Formative: Assessment designed to provide direction for improvement and / or adjustment to a program for individual students or the whole class. Examples include observation of learning, short quizzes, homework, instructional/guided questioning, rough drafts, first attempts at learning. Formative assessment occurs during learning and is considered *practice*.
 - Summative: Assessment at the end of learning and is an evaluation designed to provide information to be used in making judgement

about a student's mastery/achievement at the end of a sequence of instruction. Such assessment includes a unit test, District Outcome Assessment, major rubric based projects, final papers, semester examinations. Examples include end of District Outcome Assessments both written and performance based, End of Unit Tests, final drafts of writing, major standards aligned projects, performances, formal presentations, and final standards aligned products, skills assessments, journals, labs, and portfolios. These are *graded assessments and make up the 70% assessment category*. Summative assessments are aligned to the local curriculum which is designed based on state learning standards. Summative assessments are created by the Subject Alignment Committees (SAC) in the respective content areas as well as teacher-create summative assessments at the classroom level.

Does this mean that formal paper pencil tests make up the entire grade?

- No. Teachers will use a variety of assessments to measure what students know and can do. Summative assessments can be demonstrated through a variety of formal and creative modes based on the content area. For example, a final project / product in the Art classroom is a summative assessment as is a final writing assignment in the English Language Arts classroom and a performance assessment in Band and Choir. Summative assessments are anything used to assess mastery of learning and may be

created at the district level by the Subject Alignment Committee (SAC), or are teacher-created.

Can students re-take a summative assessment and how will it be graded?

- Students may re-take a summative assessment in order to demonstrate improved mastery. We encourage students to do their best, first time around. We also recognize that the rate of learning at times looks different for different students. Classroom teachers will allow students to retake summative assessments providing the student follows a set procedure to secure the opportunity to re-take. *Classroom teachers will develop a procedure that works in their classroom. An example would be:*
 - Student fails test
 - Student completes a request to re-take summative assessment to be signed by a parent / guardian
 - Student completes additional learning opportunity prior to re-test (ex: tutoring, HW club, extra help during study hall, online learning activity, instructional video as recommended by the teacher)
 - Student turns in signed retake request
 - Teacher arranges time with student to retake assessment
 - Student retakes the assessment
 - Student earns new grade based on most recent test taken

Student grades will reflect the *most recent opportunity* to show mastery of learning. For example, a student takes a summative assessment twice, the second grade earned is the student grade.

- Students in the high school courses earning high school credit may retake a unit test or district outcome. Students *will not* have the opportunity to retake the semester final as it is the end of learning assessment for the whole semester and retake opportunities would have been available on the prior assessments. The semester final measures student mastery on standards that were assessed throughout the semester on other summative assessments.
- Administration recognizes that retakes may be a change to classroom teacher practice, therefore they will work with the teachers to ensure and secure a school based setting where students may retake tests as needed. While the best opportunity for a student to do well on a test is in their own classroom setting, we also recognize that in order for this to be a successful process, school administrators will support classroom teachers when students are re-taking a test by creating a time and space for such make-ups as needed.

What about late work?

- The zero will be used only as a last resort when a student chooses not to complete assigned work. When calculating a zero into a student's grade, it has a very dramatic effect. Late work will be accepted providing students work with the teacher and follow the teacher's defined expectations for late work. Teachers will exhaust as many avenues as possible to help students complete assignments, especially within the assessment category. Teachers will communicate work completion within the gradebook to

students/ parents even when work is not included in the grade. Late work will be accepted up to the summative assessment of learning. Students turning in late work is a behavior and students will be supported in improving their behaviors.

What if parents have questions about grading practices?

- Parents are encouraged to use this document as guidance regarding what is happening in the middle school classrooms. We also encourage parents to keep the line of communication open with teachers regarding student progress and individual grades. At the middle school level we encourage students to grow their role in being accountable to their learning progress. At the same time, we recognize the complexity of child development and that some students will take on this responsibility sooner than others. The goal of this initiative is to open up conversations around best practice and to ensure that what we are doing in the classrooms is driven by the research. Parents are asked to talk with their children about learning, about growth, about mastery of content and know that grades will be a reflection of where students may be in their learning at a given time.

How will teachers be encouraged and supported as we implement this initiative?

- Professional development around Purposeful Learning and Assessment and Grading will continue during Teacher Institute Days, at the building level, during after school opportunities and through PLC models at the school level. School administrators will provide guidance and support as teachers navigate some of the changes that this initiative will present.

School and District middle school administrators will support and guide teacher - home communication in order to support a successful initiative.

Works Cited

The committee utilized the research and Professional Development of the following to develop the guidance contained in the above document. While the research is vast in this area, the following resources provided the depth of our focus.

Butler, Ruth. (1988) "Teachers Going Gradeless: Toward a Future of Grownot Grades"

Feldman, Joe. (2019) Grading for Equity.

Guskey, Thomas R. (2009) Practical Solutions for Serious Problems in Standards Based Grading.

Guskey, Thomas., and Brookhart, Susan. (2019) What We Know About Grading: What Works, What Doesn't, and What's next.

Harvard University EdCast with Joe Feldman. (2020)
<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/19/12/harvard-edcast-grading-equity>

Hattie, John. & Klaus Zierer. 10 Mindframes for Visible Learning: Teaching for Success Routledge, 2017. New York, NY.

Marzano, Robert J. (2006) Classroom Assessment and Grading that Work.

Moss, Connie M., & Brookhart, Susan M. (2009) Advancing Formative Assessment in Every Classroom.

O'Connor, Kenneth. (2007) A Repair Kit for Grading: 15 Fixes for Broken Grades.

Oertle, Steve. Assistant Superintendent Roxana School District.

Presentations to staff 201-2019 and 2019-2020.

Schimmer, Tom. (2016) Grading from the Inside Out.

Wormeli, Rick. (2006) Fair isn't always Equal: Assessment and Grading in the Differentiated Classroom.

Wormeli, Rick. Standards Based Grading.

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=rick+wormeli&&view=detail&mid=C0EF31BCC3FBBF9B8129C0EF31BCC3FBBF9B8129&&FORM=VRDGAR&ru=%2Fvideos%2Fsearch%3Fq%3Drick%2Bwormeli%26qpvt%3Drick%2Bwormeli%26FORM%3DVDRE>

•<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TM-3PFflfvI>

•<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TM-3PFflfvI>

•<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=video+standards+based+grading&view=detail&mid=A0A3FDF0E291BBB7BECDA0A3FDF0E291BBB7BECDA&FORM=VIRE>

•<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BO2gndc4d9I>

•Teacher Survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FK6S56F>

Feldman, Joe. Grading for Equity. Corwin, 2019. Thousand Oaks, CA.

Feldman, Joe. School of Education, Harvard University. EdCast.

December 11, 2019.

<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/19/12/harvard-edcast-grading-equity>

Marzano, Robert J. Classroom Assessment and Grading that Work.

O'Connor, Kenneth. A Repair Kit for Grading: 15 Fixes for Broken Grades.

Red House Learning, 2008. Portland, OR.

District Level Grading and Assessment Committee presentations led by

Paula Sereleas. Dates

Wormeli, Rick. Fair Isn't Always Equal.

Wormeli, Rick. Standards Based Grading.

Wormeli, Rick. Video Library:

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=rick+wormelli+videos&view=detail&mid=C8F2D6940946E2149A6EC8F2D6940946E2149A6E&FORM=VIRE>