

Grand Island Public Schools

Grading and Reporting Practices

History

Districtwide grading and reporting practices was identified as a district improvement initiative in the spring of 2005 for three reasons: 1) the need to better link grading and reporting practices with districtwide curricular, instructional, and assessment philosophies and practices; 2) the need for consistent grading practices within and among grade levels and courses; and 3) the implementation of a new computerized recordkeeping system that would provide parents with access to their children's grades.

A 16-person K-12 Grading & Reporting Task Force was organized in May 2005 for the purpose of developing and implementing districtwide policies and practices that would ensure effective and consistent implementation of the grading and reporting of students' learning. Nancy Schisler has chaired this task force since the first year of planning (2005-06) through the first of three years of implementation (2006-07).

The essential question posed for district staff, and specifically the task force, was "What is our confidence level that the grades assigned to K-12 students are consistent, accurate, meaningful, and supportive of learning? Ken O'Connor from Canada has served as the district's consultant for G&R issues, and has spent several days with GIPS staff. His book, How to Grade For Learning: Linking Grades to Standards, has been used throughout the district, along with articles from noted authors such as Rick Stiggins, Bob Marzano, Tom Guskey, Doug Reeves, Jay McTighe, and Rick Wormelli.

Grading & Reporting Philosophy

All GIPS grading and reporting practices will support the learning process and encourage student success (May 2006).

Purposes for Grading Students' Work

Primary Purpose

- Communicate achievement status to students, parents, and others

Secondary Purposes

- Provide information that students can use for self-evaluation and growth
- Encourage student growth and progress in learning
- Identify students for available educational opportunities (e.g., courses or programs)
- Evaluate the effectiveness of curricular, instructional, and assessment practices and programs

Definitions

Scores: the number (or letter) given to any student assessment or performance

Grades: the number (or letter) reported at the end of a period of time as a summary statement of student performance

Achievement: absolute level of performance

Growth: improvement by an individual relative to prior performance

Progress: improvement by an individual relative to a goal or standard

GIPS Grading & Reporting Guidelines and Practices

Based on a review of educational research and best practices, the district's Grading & Reporting Task Force established a framework of 16 effective grading practices in 2006, which overlap and have been organized within nine guidelines. These guidelines will be fully implemented by the 2008-09 school year, with the overall goal of supporting the learning process and encouraging student success. Quality use of these grading practices is directly dependent on the quality of formative and summative assessments teachers use on a regular basis to measure learning. These guidelines articulate to all stakeholders, and facilitate the implementation of, a grading philosophy which is consistent with educational best practices and all other aspects of the district's teaching and learning practices. At the same time, these guidelines do provide some flexibility for individual teacher use -- because effective grading practices must be implemented by teachers based on both evidence and professional judgment.

Guideline 1: Relate grades to the achievement of the district's course/grade level standards.

- GIPS course/grade level standards will provide the basis for determining grades for each course and grade level.

Guideline 2: Use agreed-on performance standards as the reference points when determining grades.

- The meaning of grades, whether letters or numbers, will be derived from clear descriptions of performance standards (e.g., proficient, "B").
- Students will earn the grade when they hit the goal, which means a bell curve cannot be used.

Guideline 3: Separate achievement from all other dispositions and behaviors.

- Grades will be based solely on achievement of course/grade level standards. Student attendance, effort, ability, participation, improvement, attitude, and other behaviors will be reported separately from achievement.
- Grades will be based on individual, not group, achievement.

Guideline 4: Sample student performance. Don't score everything & don't include all scores in grades.

- Grades will be determined primarily on a combination of assessments (both unit and course/grade level) and performance tasks [see Guidelines for Weighting Secondary Grades].
- Use rubrics, assessment checklists, and other types of scoring guides to provide formative feedback on various types of performance tasks (e.g., products, projects, and other performances).

Guideline 5: Grade in pencil and maintain records so they can be easily updated.

- Students will be provided with multiple assessment opportunities to show what they know, understand, and how they can use knowledge.

Guideline 6: To determine grades at the end of the grading period, use professional judgment when considering the body of evidence. Grading must involve more than just crunching numbers.

- Use the most consistent level of achievement, with emphasis on the more recent performance when applicable.
- When averaging scores, give serious consideration to using the median (or mode), rather than the mean.
- No zeros for missing or incomplete work.
- Extra credit opportunities may be provided only when relevant to demonstrating intended curriculum standards.

Guideline 7: Use quality assessments and properly record evidence of achievement.

- Use assessments that meet rigorous design criteria (e.g., clear targets, clear purpose, appropriate match of target and method, appropriate sampling, and lack of bias and distortion).
- Use appropriate tools (e.g., portfolios, checklists) to record and maintain evidence of achievement as well as evidence of work habits/life skills.

Guideline 8: Involve students in the assessment and grading processes throughout the learning cycle.

- Ensure that students understand in advance how their grades will be determined (age appropriate).
- Involve students in the assessment process, record keeping, and communicating their achievement and progress.

| Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 |
|---------|---------|---------|
| 2006-07 | 2007-08 | 2008-09 |

GIPS Implementation Schedule

Districtwide Grading and Reporting Practices

Guideline 1: Relate grades to the achievement of the district's course/grade level standards.

| | | |
|----|--|--------|
| ES | | MS, HS |
|----|--|--------|

GIPS course/grade level standards will provide the basis for determining grades for each course and grade level.

Guideline 2: Use agreed-on performance standards as the reference points when determining grades.

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| | ES | MS, HS |
|--|----|--------|

The meaning of grades, whether letters or numbers, will be derived from clear descriptions of performance standards (e.g., proficient, "B").

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| | ES | MS, HS |
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Students will earn the grade when they hit the goal, which means a bell curve cannot be used.

Guideline 3: Separate achievement from all other dispositions and behaviors.

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| ES, MS | HS | |
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Grades will be based solely on achievement, of course/grade level standards. Student attendance, effort, ability, participation, improvement, attitude, and other behaviors will be reported separately from achievement.

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| ES, MS | HS | |
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Grades should be based on individual, not group, achievement.

Guideline 4: Sample student performance. Don't score everything & don't include all scores in grades.

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| | ES, MS, HS | |
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Grades will be determined primarily on a combination of assessments (both unit and course/grade level) and performance tasks [see Guidelines for Weighting Secondary Grades].

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| MS, HS | ES | |
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Use rubrics, assessment checklists, and other types of scoring guides to provide formative feedback on various types of performance tasks (e.g., products, projects, and other performances).

Guideline 5: Grade in pencil and maintain records so they can be easily updated.

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| | ES, MS, HS | |
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Students will be provided with multiple assessment opportunities to show what they know, understand, and how they can use knowledge.

Guideline 6: To determine grades at the end of the grading period, use professional judgment when considering the body of evidence. Grading must involve more than just crunching numbers.

| | | |
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| HS | MS | ES |
| HS | MS | ES |
| | MS, HS | ES |
| HS | MS | ES |

Use the most consistent level of achievement, with emphasis on the more recent performance when applicable.

When averaging scores, give serious consideration to using the median (or mode), rather than the mean.

No zeros for missing or incomplete work.

Extra credit opportunities may be provided only when relevant to demonstrating intended curriculum standards.

Guideline 7: Use quality assessments and properly record evidence of achievement.

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Use assessments that meet rigorous design criteria (e.g., clear targets, clear purpose, appropriate match of target and method, appropriate sampling, and lack of bias and distortion).

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Use appropriate tools (e.g., portfolios, checklists) to record and maintain evidence of achievement as well as evidence of work habits/life skills.

Guideline 8: Involve students in the assessment and grading processes throughout the learning cycle.

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Ensure that students understand in advance how their grades will be determined (age appropriate).

Involve students in the assessment process, record keeping, and communicating their achievement and progress.

Additional Explanation of Guideline 4 Practices

Guidelines for Weighting Secondary Grades

In order to help strike an appropriate balance between the two weighted portions -- 1) Lesson Practice & Progress Checks and 2) Unit and Course/Grade Level Assessments & Performance Tasks -- all GIPS secondary teachers will weight the scores collected in their gradebooks according to the GIPS Guidelines for Weighting Secondary Grades (chart below). This "70% plus and 30% minus" balance reflects the district's emphasis on assigning periodic grades (quarterly at middle schools and six weeks at high school) mostly on culminating types of evidence.

Students must be expected to complete all major work assigned. When possible, most all Unit and Course/Grade Level Assessments & Performance Tasks should be designed so that the total points possible on each assessment and performance task is fairly equal in importance. A major score should be weighted more heavily only on occasion when it is much more significant (e.g., culminating assessment).

Teachers need to limit the energy and time frames given to chasing down missed practice in order to focus heavily on designing and using **major assessments and performances tasks per semester** (4-6 per quarter at middle school and 7-12 per semester at high school). The body of evidence for all Unit and Course/Grade Level Assessments & Performance Tasks should reflect a variety of relevant and meaningful assessments and tasks, each of which directly measures the course standards. An alternative assessment or task is often needed to provide second chances and minimize cheating.

The **appropriate role of daily practice** is to develop knowledge and skills effectively and efficiently through repetition and feedback that is accurate, helpful, and timely; it is not to provide grading opportunities. It is also critical that teachers communicate to students the important relationship between practice -- both guided and independent practice -- and performing well on assessments and performances tasks.

Unit and Course/Grade Level Assessments & Performance Tasks

Major Assessments **FOR** and **OF** Learning

measures understanding and use of knowledge
(range of 4-6 per quarter or 7-12 per semester)

**NO LESS than
70% of final grade**

- ☐ Unit assessments, and also mid-unit assessments for long units, which measure course and unit standards
- ☐ Major performance tasks -- mainly products, performances, and projects (e.g., essays; artwork; visual representations; models; multimedia; oral presentations; lab experiences; live or recorded performances)
- ☐ District Assessments, which measure course standards

Lesson Practice & Progress Checks

Assessment **FOR** Learning

**NO MORE than
30% of final grade**

- ☐ Independent practice on daily work (daily assignments and homework)
- ☐ Brief progress checks (e.g., short quizzes over multiple lessons; reviews or warmups)

Additional Explanation of Guideline 5 Practices

Students will be provided with multiple assessment opportunities to show what they know, understand, and how they can use knowledge.

Students must have multiple opportunities to complete all **unit** assessments and performance tasks. Students need to be given the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in different ways and at different speeds. Teachers should vary assessment opportunities including the type of assessments, the number of assessment opportunities, time available, and the assessment methods used.

The practice of providing multiple opportunities does not mean second chances should automatically be given to students for every assessment or performance task. Students must provide evidence that they have completed some type of correctives (e.g., personal study or practice, peer tutoring, study guides, or review classes) before they are allowed second chance opportunities. Any reteaching, review, or reassessment should be done at the teacher's convenience (O'Connor, 2002, How to Grade for Learning: Linking Grades to Standards, p. 133).

When second chance opportunities are made available, they should be made available to **all students** who have met the reassessment criteria. A student's score on a reassessment should not be averaged with the original score, with professional judgment necessary for various scenarios.

Additional Explanation of Guideline 6 Practices

Use of Professional Judgment

Students are responsible for completing all assigned work to the best of their ability. Individual teachers have responsibility for keeping their students before, during, and/or after school to get all types of work completed.

The grade assigned for the grading period -- nine weeks at middle school and semester long at high school -- must be based on both the **body of evidence** (the scores) and **professional judgment** (common sense). Teachers need to understand their options and authority for infusing judgment when assigning semester grades.

At the conclusion of the grading period, professional judgement involves consideration of the most appropriate central tendency (mean, median, or mode) and how best to address more recent scores. Professional judgement requires asking the question "**which grade makes the most sense?**" A teacher's professional judgment is defensible when it is based on the district's established grading practices and principles.

Based on evidence and professional judgment, **teachers are expected to assign the most appropriate nine weeks or semester grade**. Students need to understand that a teacher's professional judgment at the semester's end, **based on the body of evidence, may override their average score and result in either a higher or lower grade**.

Secondary teachers have the authority to lower a student's semester grade for not completing a sufficient number of Unit and Course/Grade Level Assessments & Performance Tasks, and may assign incomplete "Inc" or No Credit "NC" when the body of completed work is insufficient to measure the course standards. Students need to understand that eventually, all incompletes must be converted to some type of score, and that if they have failed to show sufficient evidence relative to the course standards, no credit may be appropriate.

No zeros for missing or incomplete work.

For Middle School Level Grading Only

As professionals, we have come to the conclusion that assigning zeroes for grades is no longer an acceptable practice. Therefore, it is expected that teachers will make multiple attempts to intervene with and communicate to students and/or parents about incomplete work.

Student work in the Lesson Practice & Progress Checks portion will be recorded as Incomplete (INC) in the Infinite Campus Gradebook. Middle school students will have until the end of the quarter to complete these activities or the Incomplete (INC) will remain.

A middle level student who has not completed major assessments by the end of the quarter will receive an Incomplete on the report card. The student will then have two weeks after the end of the quarter to make up any missing assessments and remove the Incomplete or the Incomplete (INC) will remain.

For High School Level Grading Only

No zeros for missing or incomplete work except for Lesson Practice and Progress Checks.

Students will have five days beyond the assignment date to complete Lesson Practice and Progress Checks, unless there are extenuating circumstances. A late work penalty may be applied up to a total of 10%. After five days and multiple teacher attempts to intervene with the student, an M will be entered in the grade book until the work is turned in or until the end of the six-week grading period. Work still not complete at the conclusion of the six week grading period will be designated as (M) and will be factored into the final six-week grade as a zero.

Teachers should enter missing assessment scores or projects as an (M) in the grade book until the work is completed or until the end of the semester. After five days and multiple teacher attempts to intervene with the student, the work is turned into Get Above Passing, (GAP for grade 9), or Assessment Completion Today, (ACT grade 10-12) coordinators. When the work is completed it will be scored and recored in the grade book subject to late penalties (up to 10%).

A high school student who has not completed major assessments or projects by the end of the semester may receive No Credit (NC) if the student has failed to demonstrate mastery or basic competency on an essential learning goal. An NC marking will have a GPA value of zero on a five-point scale (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0.)