



Parent Guide to Proficiency-Based Grading

Grades Kindergarten - Fifth

Parent Guide to Proficiency-Based Grading

In District 100, we believe student achievement occurs through clearly defined standards and authentic learning opportunities. The district strives to provide accurate, meaningful, and timely feedback to both students and parents throughout the learning process.

What is Proficiency-Based Grading

Proficiency-based grading communicates how students perform on a set of clearly defined learning targets called standards. The purpose of proficiency-based grading is to identify what a student knows, or is able to do, in relation to those learning targets - as opposed to simply averaging grades/scores over the course of the grading period, which can mask what a student has learned or not learned.

Why Proficiency-Based Grading?

Proficiency-based grading reports what students should know and be able to do within each content area at each grade level. The real-time monitoring of student performance reflects a more accurate picture of student achievement. Other reasons for proficiency-based grading include:

- Current methods of grading do not accurately indicate what a student knows and is able to do.
- Students will be able to explain what they learned or did not learn rather than recite a percentage.
- It can benefit all learners - students who struggle and accelerated learners.
- Parents are provided information on specific standards while receiving meaningful feedback.



How Does Proficiency-Based Differ from Traditional Grading?

A proficiency-based grading system measures a student's mastery of grade-level standards by prioritizing the most recent, consistent level of performance. A student who may have struggled at the beginning of a content or course when first learning new material may still be able to demonstrate mastery of key content/concepts by the end of a grading period.

In traditional grading systems, a student's performance for an entire quarter is averaged together. Early quiz scores that were low would be averaged together with more proficient performance later in the course, resulting in a lower overall grade than the current performance indicates.

Proficiency-based report cards also separate academic performance from work habits/behavior in order to provide parents a more accurate view of a student's progress in both areas. Effort, participation, cooperation, and attendance are reported separately, not as a part of academic performance.

How are my Student's "Grades" Determined?

A student's performance on a series of assessments or tasks will be used to determine overall mastery, much as it has in the past. Examples of assessments or tasks may be an observation of the student, the student demonstrating a task, completing a project or taking a test or quiz. The difference will be reporting of mastery levels instead of numbers or letters ("Mastery" instead of "A" or 92%). Levels of achievement will be clearly defined.

What Are the Levels of Mastery and What Do They Represent?

There are four levels of achievement:

- 4 **Exceeds** the Standard
- 3 **Mastery** of the Standard
- 2 **Approaching** the Standard
- 1 **Partial Knowledge** of the Standard with assistance



When Will I Receive Feedback?

- Report cards will be sent home three times a year (trimesters). Trimesters allow students more time to work towards mastery of a standard. On the report cards, subject areas will be broken down and there will be a mastery level (4, 3, 2, 1) indicated.
- Progress will be reported informally at least once from classroom teachers between trimesters.
 - Because students grow at different times, communication will be ongoing and will not be a set scheduled time like a traditional progress report that only happened exactly in the middle of a term.

How Does Proficiency-Based Grading Prepare Students for College and Careers?

By giving students ownership of their learning, proficiency-based grading gives students a more meaningful, realistic learning experience. Proficiency-based grading teaches students self-advocacy skills necessary to achieve in college and /or career settings.

What If I Have Additional Questions?

Please visit with your child's classroom teacher about learning targets and proficiency-based grading, as well as the building principal.



Benefits of Proficiency-Based Grading

Student Benefits

- Students are partners in their own learning
- Students monitor their own progress toward the achievement of learning targets
- Learning targets are clearly defined
- Students understand the expectations and purpose of each learning experience
- Assessments and performance tasks are clearly aligned to the learning targets
- Students are offered multiple opportunities and ways through which to demonstrate mastery
- All students can achieve to their highest potential

Parent Benefits

- Parents can monitor their student's progress
- Parents know in what areas their child needs more support and where their child should be pushed to higher levels
- In seeking colleges, parents and students have a better idea of the student's true academic ability

Teacher Benefits

- Teachers of the same courses have the same expectations and standards
- Teachers work more closely together due to collective goals and understandings
- Collaboration encourages consistency between teacher more than ever
- In the same way that expectations for students are clearer, expectations for teachers are clearer as well
- Teachers know exactly where students stand in their progress toward learning targets and what supports to provide
- Assessment results help teachers determine when students need extra help and when they need more challenging work
- Professional development is focused on teachers helping students achieve at higher level.