

Grand Island Public Schools

Grading and Reporting Guiding Documents

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, and Jay McTighe.

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

Districtwide Grading & Reporting Guidelines and Practices (to be fully Implemented by 2008-09 School Year)

Based on a review of educational research and best practices, the G&R Task Force agreed to the following set of grading practices, which overlap and have been organized within eight guidelines. These guidelines provide the GIPS staff with a framework of effective grading practices, with the overall goal of supporting the learning process and encouraging student success. It should be noted that the quality of any grading guidelines and practices are directly dependent on the quality of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments used to measure learning. These guidelines are intended to articulate to all stakeholders, and facilitate the implementation of, a grading philosophy which is consistent with educational best practices and all other aspects of district teaching and learning practices. At the same time, these guidelines should also provide some flexibility for individual teacher use.

Guideline 1: Relate grades to the achievement of established learning targets (C/GL standards).

- Use the GIPS curriculum standards (program, course, and unit level) as the basis for determining grades.

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

- The meaning of grades, whether letters or numbers, should come from clear descriptions of performance standards.
- Students earn the grade whenever they hit the goal, which means there can be no bell curve.

Guideline 3: Separate achievement from other dispositions such as effort and participation.

- Grades should be based solely on achievement. Student attendance, effort, ability, participation, improvement, attitude, and other behaviors should be reported separately from achievement.
- Grades should be based on individual, not group, achievement.

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

- Use rubrics, assessment checklists, and other types of scoring guides to provide feedback on formative performances.
- Determine grades based primarily on a variety of end-of-unit assessment and course/grade level assessments, which are completed more toward the end of the grading period [see Guidelines for Weighting Secondary Grades].

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

- Use the most consistent level of achievement, with heavy emphasis on the more recent performance.
- Provide multiple assessment opportunities for students to show what they understand and how they can use knowledge.

Guideline 6: Use care when crunching scores to determine grades.

- When determining grades, consider the 'body of evidence' and use professional judgment. Don't just calculate grades.
- When averaging scores, give serious consideration to using the median or mode, and avoid using the mean.
- Assign a minimum score of 50% -- rather than a zero -- for all types of student work that is completed, but not of passing quality, and also for work that is not completed.
- Avoid providing extra credit opportunities which are not relevant to demonstrating intended learning targets.

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 and work habit/dispositions.

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

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

Year 1 2006-07	Year 2 2007-08	Year 3 2008-09
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Implementation Schedule for Districtwide Grading & Reporting Practices

Guideline 1: Relate grading procedures to the intended learning targets.

	ES	MS, HS
ES		MS, HS

Relate grades to the achievement of intended learning targets (course/grade level standards).
Use the GIPS curriculum standards (program, course, and unit level) as the basis for determining grades.

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

	ES	MS, HS
	ES	MS, HS

Use agreed-on performance standards as reference points when determining grades.
The meaning of grades, whether letters or numbers, should come from clear descriptions of performance standards.

	ES	MS, HS
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Students earn the grade whenever they hit the goal, which means there can be no bell curve.

Guideline 3: Separate individual achievement from other valued attributes.

ES, MS	HS	
ES, MS	HS	

Separate achievement from other dispositions such as effort and participation.
Grades should be based solely on achievement, with all other behaviors (e.g., student attendance, effort, ability, participation, improvement, and attitude) reported separately.

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 and don't include all scores in grades.

	ES, MS, HS	
	ES, MS, HS	

Sample student performance. Don't score everything and don't include all scores in grades.
Use rubrics, assessment checklists, and other types of scoring guides to provide feedback on formative performances.

MS, HS	ES	
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Determine grades based primarily on a variety of end-of-unit assessment and course/grade level assessments, which are completed more toward the end of the grading period [see 2007-08 Guidelines for Weighting Secondary Grades].

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

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

Grade in pencil and maintain records so they can be updated easily.
Use the most consistent level of achievement, with heavy emphasis on the more recent performance.
Provide multiple assessment opportunities for students to show what students understand and how they can use knowledge.

Guideline 6: Use care when crunching scores to determine grades.

HS	MS	ES
HS	MS	ES

Use care when crunching scores to determine grades.
When determining grades, consider the 'body of evidence' and use professional judgment. Don't just calculate grades.

HS	MS	ES
MS, HS		ES

When averaging scores, give serious consideration to using the median or mode, and avoid using the mean.
Assign a minimum score of 50% -- rather than a zero -- for all types of student work completed but not of passing quality, and also for work that is late or not completed.

HS	MS	ES
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Do not provide extra credit opportunities which are not relevant to demonstrating intended learning targets.

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

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

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

Guideline 8: Discuss and involve students in the assessment process, including grading, throughout the teaching and learning cycle.

Discuss and involve students in the assessment process (includes grading) throughout the teaching/learning cycle.
Ensure that students understand how their grades will be determined (age appropriate).
Involve students in the assessment process, in record keeping, and in communicating their achievement and progress.

**Supplemental Information Supporting
Districtwide Grading & Reporting Guidelines and Practices**

Explanation of Guideline 4

Guidelines for Weighting Secondary Grades

In order to help strike an appropriate balance between the Lesson Practice and Activities portion and the Unit and Course/Grade Level Understanding and Performance portion, all GIPS secondary teachers should weight all scores collected in their gradebooks during the 2007-08 school year. This "70 plus/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 [see Guidelines for Weighting Secondary Grades].

**Grand Island Public Schools
2007-08 Guidelines for Weighting Secondary Grades**

<p>Unit and Course/Grade Level Understanding and Performance</p> <p>"the bigger stuff"</p> <p>NO LESS THAN 70% OF FINAL GRADE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Unit (chapter) assessments<input type="checkbox"/> Unit or major performance tasks -- mainly products, performances, and projects (e.g., essays; artwork; visual representations; models; multimedia; oral presentations; lab experiences; live or recorded performances)<input type="checkbox"/> District (Course/Grade Level) Assessments	<p>Lesson Practice and Activities</p> <p>"the smaller stuff"</p> <p>NO MORE THAN 30% OF FINAL GRADE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Independent practice on daily work (daily assignments and homework)<input type="checkbox"/> Brief progress checks (e.g., small quizzes over one or more lessons; reviews or warmups)
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Explanation of Guideline 5

Provide Multiple Assessment Opportunities for Students to Show What They Understand How They Can Use Knowledge

Students should 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, number of assessment opportunities, time available, and assessment methods used.

The practice of providing multiple assessment opportunities does not mean second chances should automatically be given to students for every assessment. Students must provide evidence that they have completed some type of correctives (e.g., personal study/practice, peer tutoring, worksheets, 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, K. 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.

Explanation of Guideline 6

Assign a score of 50% -- rather than a zero -- for all types of student work that is completed, but not of passing quality, and also for work that is not completed.

As professionals, we have come to the conclusion that, both mathematically and ethically, assigning zeroes for grades is no longer an acceptable practice.

Students will receive a score of no lower than a 50% when their work is completed, but not of passing quality, and also when their work is not completed ("completed" is defined as handed in to the teacher). The rationale, as supported by numerous experts and professional articles that have been reviewed by GIPS staff the past two years, is that assigned zeroes have an undeserved and devastating influence, so much that no matter what the student does, a single zero can distort the final grade and any true indication of proficiency or mastery. If students act irresponsibly and/or don't learn, we fail, and failure is failure, no matter the degree (Wormelli, R. 2006. *Fair Isn't Always Equal: Assessing & Grading in the Differentiated Classroom*, p. 140).

Student work in the Lesson Practice and Activities portion, which can be no more than 30%, should be recorded as "missing" (M) in the gradebook. At the secondary level (6-12), students will have two weeks after the due dates to complete these activities or else the missing (M) work will be converted in the gradebook to a failing grade, which can be no lower than 50%.

Every attempt should be made to get students to complete all tasks within the Unit and Course/Grade Level Understanding and Performance portion, which represents no less than 70% of the final grade. At the middle level, a student with missing tasks at the end of a nine grading period will receive an "Incomplete" on the report card. Students will then have two weeks after the end of the quarter to make up any missing work before the task will be recorded as a failing grade, which can be no lower than 50%. When such tasks are not completed by the end of the high school's six week grading period, the student's score for any missing or incomplete task should be recorded as a failing grade, which can be no lower than 50%.