

Reflection on Classroom Grading Practices Survey
-Adapted from Appendix G

Classroom Grading Practices	Very Little 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3	Very Often 4
Teachers in my building grade and communicate student achievement based on NYS/Common Core Standards.				
Teachers in my building grade and communicate student progress based on NYS/Common Core Standards.				
Teachers in my building inform students about grading criteria and methods used for determining a grade at the beginning of and throughout the unit, term/year.				
Teachers in my building assess student achievement and assign a grade based on pre-determined and consistent criteria.				
Teachers in my building use formative assessments to provide information about student progress and direction for improvement but not for determining an achievement grade.				
Teachers in my building use summative assessments to make judgments about student achievement at the end of a period of instruction and for determining a grade.				
Teachers in my building emphasize the most recent achievement data when determining a grade.				
Teachers in my building gather achievement data to inform my professional judgment in determining a grade.				
Teachers in my building use a reliable recording system to track student achievement.				
Teachers in my building “crunch” numbers fairly to determine a grade.				
Teachers in my building use a variety of assessments to determine a grade.				
Teachers in my building determine a grade based on achievement of learner outcomes, rather than on motivation and control.				
Teachers in my building report on work habits (effort, participation, behavior & attendance) separately from achievement grades.				

Teachers in my building establish procedures to address work habit issues so that consequences do not distort a grade.				
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How to Grade For Learning by Ken O'Connor



SAANYS CONFERENCE
OCTOBER 2016

IMPLEMENTING CONSISTENT
GRADING PRACTICES
WHERE DO YOU START?

Shannon Whitcombe
Alexander Middle & High School Principal

Before We Start



Survey on Grading and Reporting Practices

Classroom Grading Practices	Very Little 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3	Very Often 4
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Teachers in my building establish procedures to address work habit issues so that consequences do not distort a grade.				

Background



In August 2009, I attended the HOPE Foundation Educator's Workshop in Niagara Falls and heard Ken O'Connor present for the first time. In the Fall of 2010, after reading his book, How To Grade For Learning, I decided to explore the idea of developing consistent grading practices within my Building (Grades 6-12).

I thought it would be a relatively simple endeavor.

It was not....

The Plan



The initial plan was:

- (1) The District would purchase the book, How To Grade For Learning for all Curricular Chairs (K-12);
- (2) Curricular Chairs and Admin Team would participate in a collaborative book study;
- (3) We would begin discussions with Department/Grade-Level Teams in the Secondary Building about developing consistent grading practices;
- (4) We would develop and implement consistent grading practices by the 2011-2012 school year

Step One: Learn From My Mistakes



My Timeline Was Off. Why?

- Belief that teachers would read the book and see things the way I saw them
- Underestimation of personal attachments to grading systems
- Presumption about types of grading systems and practices that were in place
- Assumption that the process would move more quickly than it did

The First Problem: Teachers' Perspectives Differed From Mine

➤ What I thought:

- We are currently implementing some grading practices that are not effective
- The practices we implement should be research-based and defensible
- A grade should communicate what a student knows about the content. **Not** how nice the student is, whether they turned in tissues for extra credit or if they didn't struggle with their homework

➤ What they thought...



YOUR THOUGHTS?

- What are your personal beliefs about grades/grade reporting?
- What areas of grading/grade reporting will be “hot button” issues in your District?

The Second Problem: Systems That Were In Place



- Not aligned with research
- Inconsistent
- Unclear

Justification For Moving Forward

I used examples of our “broken” grading practices to justify moving forward:

- A Middle School Student earned 100% on the work he completed for a Math quiz. However, the grade he received was a 50% because he used pen instead of pencil
- A High School Student was failing English. When I spoke with the student about why he was failing he informed me that, “I get high 90’s on the tests but I don’t turn in my homework.” He wasn’t lying; I verified this with his teacher
- Students who turned in boxes of tissues were given bonus points which were calculated into their averages
- A student in an AP class earned an “A” for a test grade because he beat the teacher at badminton
- Depending on *the teacher a student had* for the same course, work was due, graded and weighted differently. One teacher collected all homework the next day instead of the next class (alternating block schedule), one teacher graded all HW the other did not etc...

The Third Problem: Unrealistic Timeline

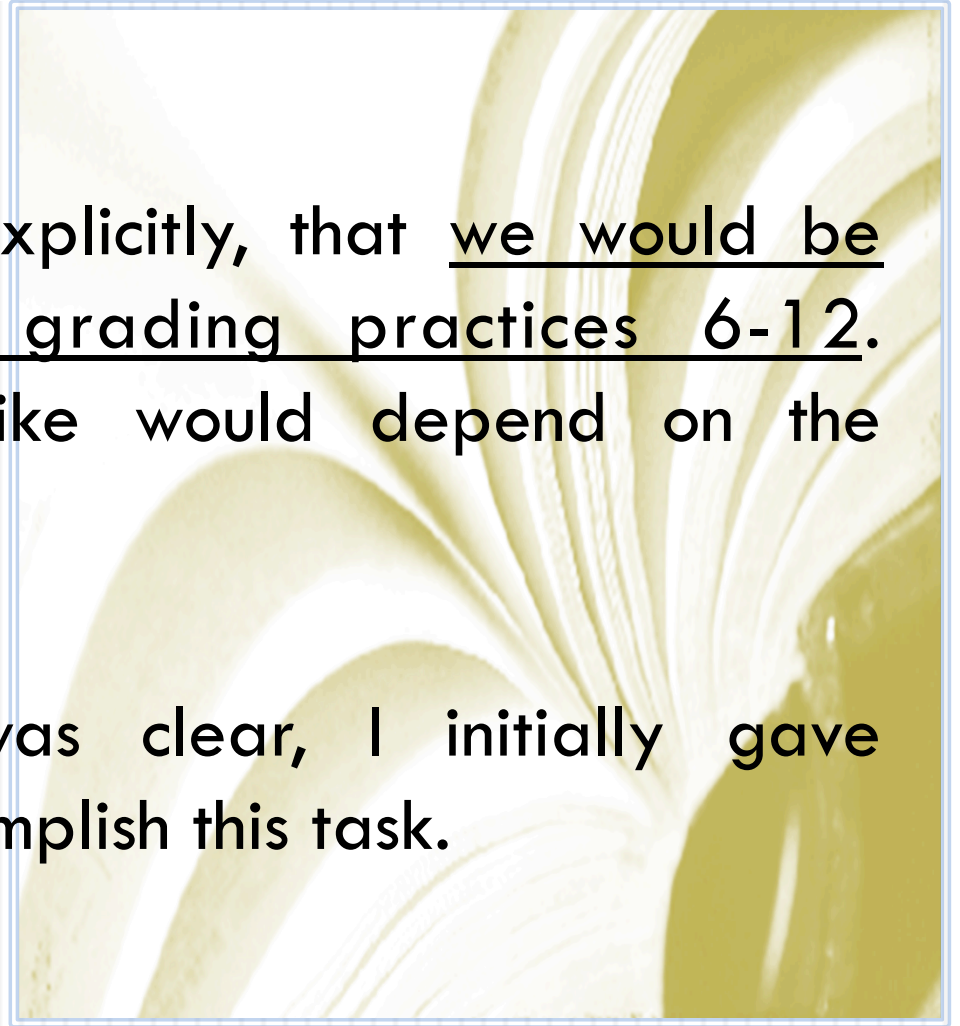


- Time needed for research
- Time to digest, debate, decide
- Time to experiment and revise
- Time to change

Step Two: Don't Make it Optional

I informed all teachers, explicitly, that we would be implementing consistent grading practices 6-12. What that would look like would depend on the Department/Grade-Level.

Although the directive was clear, I initially gave teachers two years to accomplish this task.



Step Three: Structure the Process

Each department must submit the following form/information to Shannon by 12:00 today. Thank you!

Department:	
Members Present:	
Members Absent:	
Grading practices discussed:	
Grading practice to be implemented <i>by the entire department</i> during the 2011-2012 school year:	
Our grading practice can be found in the <u>How To Grade For Learning</u> book on the following page(s):	

Each department must submit the following form/information to Shannon by 12:00 today. Thank you!

Department:	AAA	
Members Present:		
Members Absent:	—	
Grading practices discussed:	<p>MS: 10% unit tests 65% participation 25% quizzes/projects/tests</p>	<p>HS: 30% unit tests 55% participation 15% quizzes/projects/tests</p> <p>2010-2011</p> <p>Both: "risk free homework" (100 if done) — if not done)</p>
Grading practice to be implemented by the entire department during the 2011-2012 school year:	<p>2011 - 2012 * (work taken late until end of 10wk period; 15% reduction in grade for late work) *</p> <p>MS/HS 30% unit tests</p> <p>* 50% participation (attendance, classwork, games, discussions, etc.) homework . . .)</p> <p>20% quizzes, tests, projects</p> <p>* A minimum grade of 50% will be given on graded participation assignments when effort is made.</p>	
Our grading practice can be found in the <u>How To Grade For Learning</u> book on the following page(s):	I am 50% sure it's page 96!!!	

Step Four: Pay Attention



The review & revision process is perhaps the most important step when developing consistent grading practices.

Provide Feedback...

[Redacted]

4/25/11

Can you please take this back
to your department for discussion?

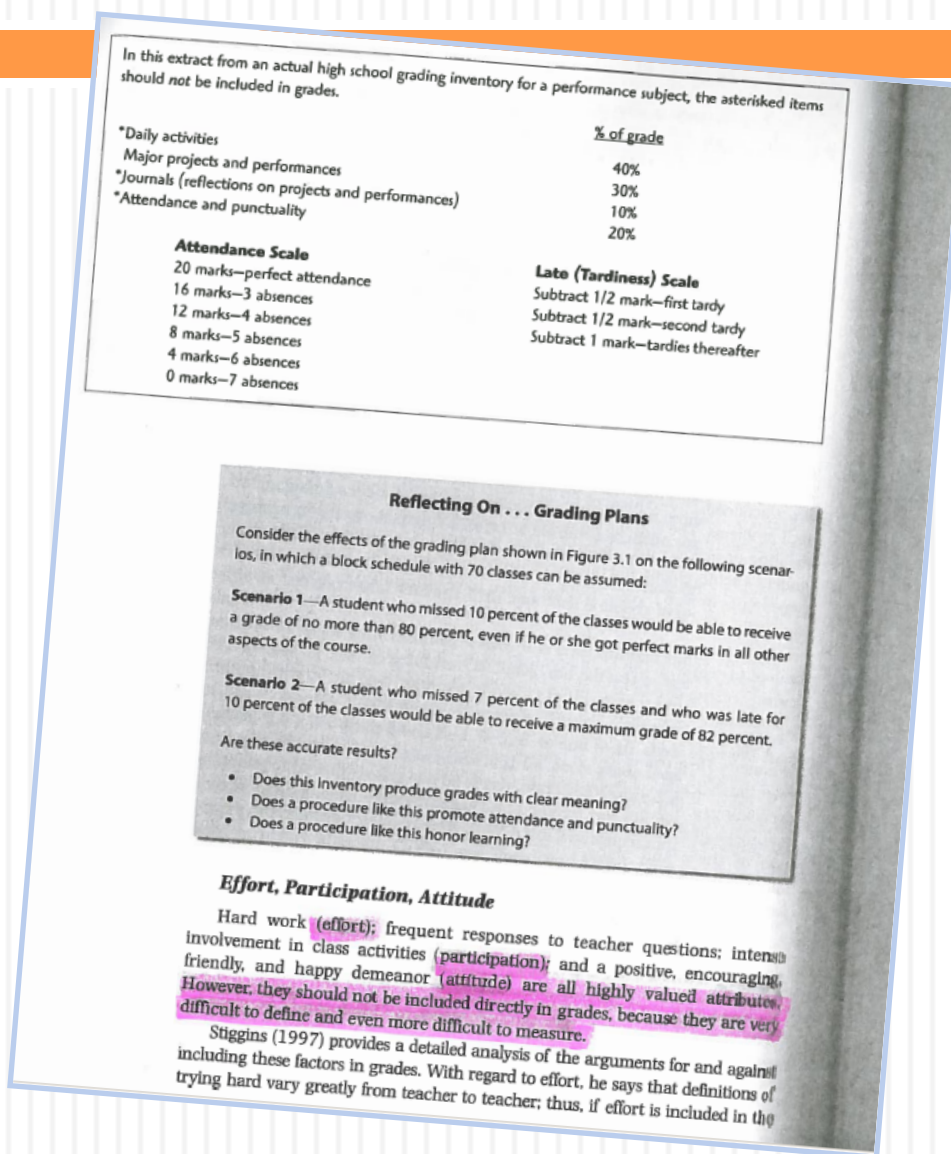
The proposed grading process
is pretty much the direct opposite
of what was proposed in the book...

Thanks!
Shanna

...Accompanied By Research

“Hard work (effort); frequent responses to teacher questions; intense involvement in class activities (participation); and a positive, encouraging, friendly and happy demeanor (attitude) are all highly valued attributes. However, they should not be included in grades because they are very difficult to define and even more difficult to measure.”

Ken O'Connor
How To Grade For Learning
3rd Edition



grade. "we add noise into the grade interpretation process" (p. 418). Noise means "static, not clear meaningful signals" (p. 413). He also notes that "students can manipulate their apparent level of effort to mislead us" (p. 418).

Stiggins (1997) suggests that participation is often a personality issue—some students are naturally more assertive, while others are naturally quieter. This is often related to gender and/or ethnicity, so we run the risk of perpetuating bias if we include effort and participation in grades. Another problem is that

Factoring effort into the grade may send the wrong message to students. In real life just trying hard to do a good job is virtually never enough. If we don't deliver relevant, practical results, we will not be deemed successful, regardless of how hard we try. (p. 418)

The inclusion of attitude presents similar problems; positive attitude has many dimensions, is very difficult to define, and is extremely difficult to measure. It is also very easy to manipulate—students can fake a positive attitude if they think or know it will help their grade.

To a considerable extent, personal and social characteristics do contribute to achievement, but including a mark for attitude as part of a mark for a product blurs the assessment of the product and affects the validity and, thus, the meaning of the grade. Also, including a mark for effort or any of these characteristics means a double benefit for successful students and double (or triple or quadruple) jeopardy for less successful students. This approach is clearly inaccurate and unfair.

As with other aspects of assessment and grading, it is essential that the behavioral expectations be as clear to teachers, students, and parents as the academic expectations. One of the best examples of clarity in this area is provided by the British Columbia performance standards (British Columbia Ministry of Education, n.d.). For grade levels K-3, 4-5, 6-8, and 8-10, separate "quick scales" and elaborated scales are provided for each grade level. Figure 3.2 shows an example for Grades 8-10. Support ideas and material can also be found at The Network of Performance Based Schools Web site (www.npbs.ca).

Several authors, including Marzano (2006) and Haladyna (1999), have suggested compromises in this area such that teachers may include behavioral components in grades, but I believe such compromises are inappropriate. Haladyna (1999) classifies criteria for grading as supportable, arguable, and unsupportable. His arguable list includes violation of deadlines, class participation, extra credit, improvement, and attendance. I believe that all of these should be placed clearly in the unsupportable category. Strong effort, active participation, and positive attitude are highly valued attributes, but if grades are to have clear meaning, they should not include these attributes. These attributes are reporting variables, not grading variables. They need to be assessed as accurately and rigorously as possible and reported separately and regularly.

"Factoring effort into the grade may send the wrong message to students. In real life just trying hard to do a good job is virtually never enough."
—Stiggins, 1997, p. 418

“Factoring effort into a grade may send the wrong message to students. In real life just trying hard to do a good job is virtually never enough. If we don’t deliver relevant, practical results, we will not be deemed successful, regardless of how hard we try.”

“Strong effort, active participation, and positive attitude are highly valued attributes, but if grades are to have clear meaning, they should not include these attributes. These attributes are reporting variables, not grading variables. They need to be assessed as accurately and rigorously as possible and reported separately and regularly.”

Step Five: Be Respectful and Reflective

This is not an easy process; be mindful of others' viewpoints and stay focused on the goal/purpose

- Teacher Perceptions
- My Personal Reflections
- Hot-Button Issues
 - Homework
 - Zeroes
 - Effort/Participation
 - Timeliness

Step Five: Be Flexible

Initially, I planned on having consistent grading practices in place by September 2011.

When it became obvious that things wouldn't go as I expected, it was time to develop a new plan.



The New Plan

- In 2010-2011, each Department Chair would conduct a book study with members of their Department; discussing pros & cons of individual grading practices
- Departments would select **one** consistent grading practice (ex. grading homework vs. not grading homework) to implement during the 2012-2013 school year
- After implementing one consistent practice, align all grading practices (MS chose to do this by Grade-Level; HS by Departments)
- Grade-Level Teams (Grades 6-8) and Departments (Grades 9-12) were given the 2012-2013 AND the 2013-2014 school years to develop consistent grading practices
- By June 2014, Departments needed to have approved consistent grading practices in place for full implementation in September 2014.
- Revise long-term expectations

Step Six: Set Realistic Long-Term Goals



- 1-year plan
 - Have Departments/Grade-Levels start with components of grading they can agree upon
 - Focus on high-priority items (zeroes, weighting, lateness)
 - I know what you're thinking...
- 3-year plan
 - What factors should be included in grades
 - Modify weighting to fully align with research
- 5+ plan
 - Consistency 6-12
 - Eliminate behaviors from grade calculations
 - Next logical steps: Summative/Formative and Feedback

Remember, Purpose Is The Purpose



- You need to have the discussion about the purpose of grades. Why do we give grades?
- A common language must be established and utilized
- Start small
- Choose your battles
- Stay focused
- Rely on research



Your Thoughts?

- What is the purpose of a grade?
- How do you communicate “Non-achievement Factors” such as Effort, Behavior & Attendance?
 - Ideal “Set Up?”

Long-Term Planning Is Important

Maintain Focus...

- The meaning of grades must be discussed and clearly defined
- Weighting of grades is equally as important as what a grade is composed of
- Non-academic factors should not be included in a grade

...With A Vision

- Aligned assessments
- Formative vs. summative
- Use of (in)formative assessment data
- How to give quality feedback

So Where Am I Now?

As of September 2016, ALL classes in grades 6-12 utilize consistent grading practices:

Behaviors and *attitudes* are now separated from achievement. Specifically, we:

- utilize the *Trojan PRIDE College and Career Readiness Rubric* to report on behaviors that do not provide evidence of academic achievement (ex. submitting assignments late, completing an assignment with the wrong writing utensil, being unprepared, not participating etc.). These behaviors are reported separately from a student's grades.
- provide strategic extra credit opportunities if appropriate. Only those extra credit activities that demonstrate the achievement standards will be permitted.
- encourage students to give their best effort by not reporting averages below *50% on Report Cards (***final** course averages below 50% **will be** reported at the end of the year). Students will have a mathematical opportunity to "recover" from a bad marking period.
- grade students on their individual performance (no group grades)

Deadlines

An important skill for students to master while in Middle School and High School is the ability to meet deadlines and expectations. As such, the following deadlines are in place for submitting assignments/work:

Middle School- Assignments will be submitted within 5 school days of the original due date (or later, with prior teacher permission).

High School- Assignments will be submitted within 3 school days of the original due date (or later, with prior teacher permission).

If teachers accept late work, no penalty will be applied. If a student does not turn in the assigned work (or it is not accepted after the late work deadline), no credit will be earned for that assignment.

Types of Grades Earned

Grades are “placed” in one of two categories;
Summative Assessments or Formative Assessments.

Depending on the course(s) a student is enrolled in, the weighting of these categories will vary. **Most MS/HS courses are weighted as follows: 90% of the grade comes from Summative Assessment scores; 10% of the grade comes from Formative Assessment scores.**

Exceptions to this weighting scale exist for AP courses
and Self-Contained Courses.

Behaviors for Success

The Alexander MS/HS Building Leadership Team worked diligently to identify 5 key behaviors that lead to *College and Career Readiness* for all of our students. In order for students to meet the rigors of the “real world,” we believe that a good student needs to be: **P**repared, **R**esponsible, have **I**ntegrity, be **D**ependable and put forth **E**ffort. When students meet these expectations, they are demonstrating **Trojan PRIDE**.

Students will be evaluated on these 5 components at ten week intervals
(on 10 week Report Cards).

Trojan PRIDE

College and Career Readiness Rubric

			Rarely	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
P	<u>P</u>repared	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brings necessary materials• Abides by classroom rules and expectations				
R	<u>R</u>espectful	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Values the contributions of others• Works effectively with others• Treats teacher with respect• Treats support staff with respect• Treats classmates with respect				
I	<u>I</u>ntegrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Displays academic honesty• Serves as a role model for ethical behavior (through words and actions)• Contributes to positive classroom community (ex. no cell phone use during class)				
D	<u>D</u>ependable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Turns in assignments within established deadlines• Makes up work when absent• Displays safe behaviors in the classroom				
E	<u>E</u>ffort	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completes assignments promptly and in a timely manner• Persists when facing difficulties in learning• Independently engages in learning activities and critical self-reflection• Stays for extra help when needed				



40 Week Report Card

Alexander MS/HS
 Shannon Whitcombe, Principal
 3314 Buffalo Street
 Alexander, New York 14005
 (585) 591-1551

MS Passing Average.....75-100
 HS Passing Average.....65-100
 Honor Roll.....90-100

Grading Codes
 S= Satisfactory U= Unsatisfactory
 I= Incomplete
 P= Pass F= Fail

**College & Career Readiness
 PRIDE Rating Key:**
 1= Rarely 3= Usually
 2= Occasionally 4= Consistently

To the Parent/Guardian Of
 John Smith
 123 General Street
 Alexander, New York 14005

Student Name
 John Smith

Student Number
 123456

Counselor
 Allison Wilson

Grade
 12

Homeroom
 254

Marking Period Dates
 4/1/17 - 6/12/17

Course/Comments	MP1	MP2	MP3	MP4	Local Exam	Reg. Exam	Fin. Avg.	Cred.	College & Career Readiness PRIDE Rating	
									Prepared	Rating
English 3 • At the conclusion of this course, students will take a Regents Exam that is/may be required for graduation. At this time, the student is demonstrating proficiency with the skills necessary to be successful on the Regents Exam. • Student is a pleasure to have in class • Student is doing a good job	97	95	96	98		100	97	1.00	Prepared	3
									Respectful	4
									Integrity	4
									Dependable	4
									Effort	4
US History • At the conclusion of this course, students will take a Regents Exam that is/may be required for graduation. At this time, the student is demonstrating proficiency with the skills necessary to be successful on the Regents Exam. • Student is a pleasure to have in class • Student is doing a good job	95	95	96	95		95	95	1.00	Prepared	4
									Respectful	4
									Integrity	4
									Dependable	4
									Effort	4
Physical Education • Student failed to make up missed classes • Student is often unprepared for class	65	65	65	65	65		65	.5	Prepared	1
									Respectful	4
									Integrity	4
									Dependable	2
									Effort	1
Studio in Art • Student is a pleasure to have in class • Student is doing a good job	96	96	96	96	97		96	1.0	Prepared	4
									Respectful	4
									Integrity	4
									Dependable	4
									Effort	4

Time for Team Work



- Has your viewpoint changed at all?
- Discuss whether developing consistent grading practices is an area of interest for you
- Develop an action plan
- Q & A