

Proficiency Based Grading at Robert Frost Elementary

Granite School District has been researching proficiency based grading (PBG) and how students in our district might benefit from a grading system that focuses on a student's ability to apply their knowledge and accurately reflects areas of academic strength and weakness. Teachers in our district have been beta testing PBG utilizing Granite District Gradebook.

The premise behind Proficiency Based Grading is that grades are intended to communicate progress toward mastery of grade level content standards to students and parents. They are intended to indicate at a prescribed moment in time what a student **knows and is able to do** with respect to objectives that have been explicitly taught. They encourage the student to act on feedback and the teacher to adjust and individualize instruction.

At Robert Frost, we have been working and preparing to begin implementing Proficiency Based Grading in anticipation of an expected district-wide transition to PBG in the near future. As grade level teams, we have broken down the math and language arts core standards at each grade level and developed proficiency scales in order to assess what each individual student knows and is able to demonstrate with regard to grade level concepts. We have also developed our own student assessment tracker, to help teachers and students monitor their progress toward learning targets and goals.

Reinforcing Practices in Proficiency-Based Grading

- Issues of student behavior, participation, punctuality, work timeliness, and effort are reflected in a citizenship grade rather than an academic grade.
- "Extra credit" is not included in the academic grade.
- Points are not deducted for reasons other than a student's lack of academic mastery.
- Teachers create frequent opportunities for students to demonstrate concept mastery.
- Teachers utilize a multitude of evidence in multiple modalities to determine a student's level of proficiency: assignments, observations, portfolios, assessments, products, discussions, projects, performance tasks, etc.
- Homework is a meaningful independent practice, which requires time and effort outside the classroom and has an articulated purpose tied to content standards.
- Classroom assessments and assignments tie directly to specific content standards and objectives.
- Gradebook is updated regularly to prompt learning and increase mastery.
- Student proficiency is determined using proficiency scales and based on a 1-4 scale:

4 – Above Proficient

3 – Proficient

2 – Approaching Proficient

1 – Below Proficient

*A score of 3 or higher is considered proficient and should be equated to a letter grade in the B-C range.



How will grades be determined?

Summative scores for each standard are determined by decaying average, a grading method that puts more weight on the most recent assessment score (see information on decaying average on the next page). Student grades will be calculated by taking the sum of the content standard final scores divided by the total number of standards assessed.

What is a Decaying Average in Standards-Based Grading?

Parents will not be able to see a calculated letter grade until scores on a minimum of three assessments per standard have been entered into Gradebook. Decaying average recognizes that the most recent score is more representative of a student's current mastery level and puts more weight on that score (as opposed to a straight average that counts the student's first work and most recent work as equally important).

Comparing Traditional Grading practices and Proficiency Based Grading

Traditional Grading	Proficiency Based Grading
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Based on multiple assessment methods (quizzes, tests, homework, projects, etc.). One grade/entry is given per assessment.2. Assessments are based on a percentage system. Criteria for success may be unclear.3. Utilizes an uncertain mix of assessment, achievement, effort and behavior to determine the final grade. May use late penalties and extra credit.4. Everything may go in the Gradebook – regardless of purpose. Homework is often given more weight than assessments of learning which can be detrimental to a student's grade while they are engaged in new learning.5. May include every score, regardless of when it was collected. Method for scoring varies from teacher to teacher. Grades reflect an average of all the grades input into Gradebook.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Based on learning goals and performance on assessment opportunities specifically designed to assess one or multiple standards. A minimum of three assessments per standard is required to determine a final score on a standard. Scores are consistently reported using a scale of 1-4 which indicates the level of proficiency on the standard.2. Measures achievement only. Separates achievement from effort/behavior. No penalties or extra credit applied.3. Purposefully designed assessment opportunities are provided to students in different modalities to give each student multiple opportunities to show mastery of the standards. Opportunities for reassessment are also provided.4. Final grade calculation places greater emphasis on most recent evidence of learning. This allows students to benefit from continued learning throughout the grading period and expected improvement on assessments of the standard.

Adapted from O'Connor K (2002). How to Grade for Learning: Linking grades to standards (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.



Discussing Proficiency Based Grades with Your Student	Discussing Proficiency Based Grades with the Teacher
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What standards do you think you still need to learn? ✓ When was the last time you practiced/worked on the standard? ✓ When was the last time you were assessed on the standard? ✓ What practice, studying and/or re-teaching opportunities have you completed in preparation for the next assessment on the standard? ✓ Have you discussed opportunities for reassessment on an assessment opportunity with your teacher? ✓ If the student has demonstrated level 3 proficiency on the standard - How might you demonstrate that you are above proficient on the standard? ✓ Have you discussed opportunities to demonstrate that you are above proficient with your teacher? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Has my child completed the learning activities/homework you have provided? ✓ Will my student have another opportunity to be assessed on the standard? ✓ What assessments can my student retake? ✓ What practice, studying, and/or re-teaching opportunities should my student take advantage of prior to the next assessment? ✓ How might my student demonstrate above level proficiency on the standard?

How will proficiency-based grading help my student to be college and career ready?

Proficiency-based grading encourages students to take ownership of their own learning. It empowers them to improve understanding of a concept and advocate for multiple ways in which to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. It assures that final grades communicate more accurately to students and parents the degree to which the student is proficient in clearly articulated standards and objectives. Students will be less likely to need remedial courses in their post-secondary experiences or be incorrectly scheduled into inappropriate levels of courses.

Where can I get more information or have additional questions answered?

Teachers participating in the proficiency-based beta test group will be happy to answer questions regarding how proficiency-based grading is being implemented in their classrooms. Principals can answer general questions regarding proficiency-based grading. For additional information or questions please refer to the Granite School District website or contact Sheri Sorensen, sasorensen@graniteschools.org or 385-646-7341.

