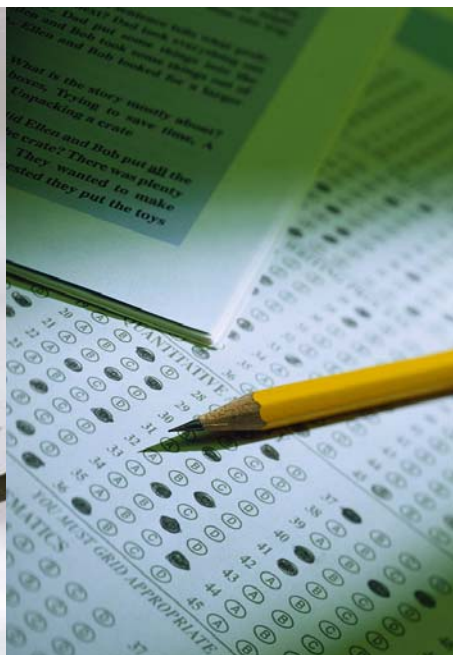




*School District of Waukesha*  
**Best Practices in Grading**  
*January 2007 (Version #1, Preface and Issues 1-7)*  
*September 2009 (Version #2 adds Issue 8, Appendices, a Condensed Version, and the Expected Practice)*



**20 Ways to Save Water : Making A Brochure**

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
<b>Content - Accuracy</b>	All facts in the brochure are accurate.	99-90% of the facts in the brochure are accurate.	89-80% of the facts in the brochure are accurate.	Fewer than 80% of the facts in the brochure are accurate.
<b>Writing - Organization</b>	Capitalization and punctuation are correct throughout the brochure.	Capitalization and punctuation are correct throughout the brochure after feedback from an adult.	There are 1-2 capitalization and/or punctuation errors in the brochure even after feedback from an adult.	There are several capitalization or punctuation errors in the brochure even after feedback from an adult.
<b>Graphics/Pictures</b>	Each section in the brochure has a clear beginning, middle, and end.	Almost all sections of the brochure have a clear beginning, middle and end.	Most sections of the brochure have a clear beginning, middle and end.	Less than half of the sections of the brochure have a clear beginning, middle and end.
<b>Writing - Vocabulary</b>	Graphics go well with the text and there is a good mix of text and graphics.	Graphics go well with the text, but there are too many that they distract from the text.	Graphics go well with the text, but there are too few and the brochure seems "text heavy".	Graphics do not go with the accompanying text or appear to be randomly chosen.
<b>Attractiveness &amp; Organization</b>	The authors correctly use several new words and define words unfamiliar to the reader.	The authors correctly use a few new words and define words unfamiliar to the reader.	The authors try to use some new vocabulary, but may use 1-2 words incorrectly.	The authors do not incorporate new vocabulary.
	The brochure has exceptionally attractive formatting and well-organized information.	The brochure has attractive formatting and well-organized information.	The brochure has well-organized information.	The brochure's formatting and organization are confusing to the reader.

# Best Practices in Grading

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Preface to “Grading Best Practices” (Version #1)  
January 2007

This Publication

Grading practices are firmly held beliefs that are near and dear to the teaching professional. Many educators struggle with ways to improve grading practices so that it portrays accurately what a given student or class has learned. Many professionals model ways they were graded that they liked and discarded other ways they found distasteful. Few professionals have ever had a college level course on the subject, and only recently in the literature has there been thorough discussion and research on the topic of grading. So why this guide?

Our History

Back in the early days of SEWAC (South Eastern Wisconsin Assessment Consortium) many educators were involved in day long workshops on best practices in assessment. They (the speakers and professors) jokingly called on us to become better “CIA” agents. Those three letters stood for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The thought was to become an agent – be the best at all three! So we began the journey with such names as Marzanno, Gusky, O’Conner, Reeves, Fullan and others. The research and thinking on grading began to gain momentum in the late 1980s. Interestingly, to this day, not much of it sifted into our school practices in any organized or consensual way.

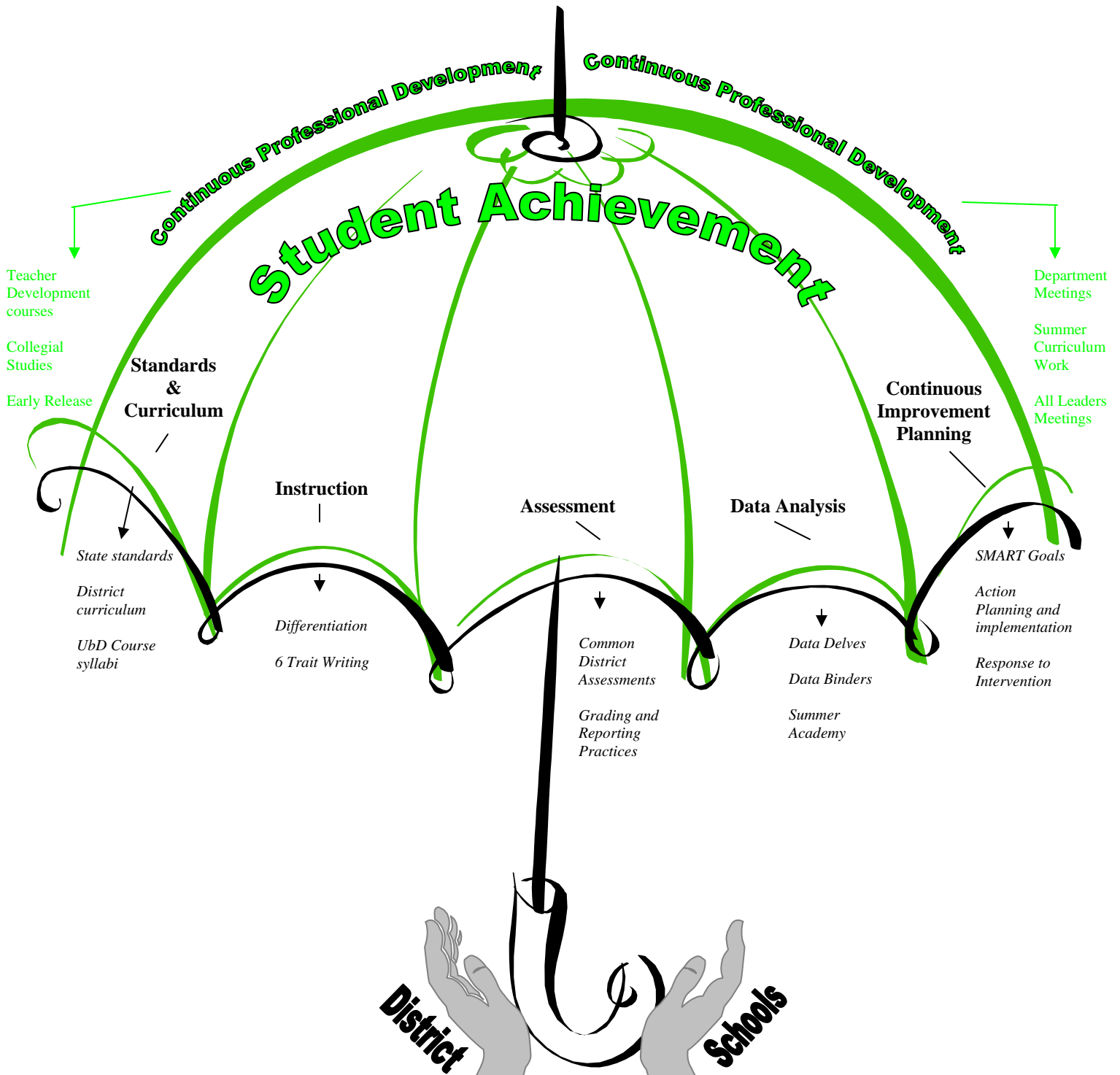
Our Culture of School Improvement

One can hardly attend any local, state, or regional workshop with out having a strand, or at least a sectional on grading and assessment. We also, as a district, were pushing ahead on other many simultaneous initiatives and beliefs that are now part of our current and historical culture. These became, and still are the focuses for district staff development planning. Since the mid 90’s, they include (in no order of importance) but are not limited to:

Consistent State Standards; Identify the Power Standards; Levels of Assessment (State, local, classroom); S.M.A.R.T. goals (specific, measurable, attainable, results oriented, time bound); Beliefs in Multiple Opportunities to Learn (multiple intelligences, emotional intelligence, various learning styles, etc.); Varying instructional strategies in all classes; Data Driven Decision Making; Common Assessments across courses, units, grades; Differentiation of Instruction; requiring Professional Learning Communities (PLCs); EIM/ERE (Early Intervention Model, Early Reading Empowerment); UBD (Understanding By Design); De-privatizing the teaching practice; 6+1 Trait® Writing Model; and next/now, Grading – best and worst practice.

(See “*SDW Initiatives – How do the pieces fit*” on the following page for a graphic display of the above)

# SDW Initiatives- How do the pieces fit?



## Foundational Questions

- What do we expect students to learn?
- What research-based strategies will we use to promote learning?
- How will we know whether or not they have learned it?
- What do we do if they don't learn?
- What do we do if they already know it?

## Policy History and Current Status

Our first board policy on grading was passed in November of 1998. It was put in place due to an administrative rule mandate by the Higher Education Aids Board to help determine recipients of the State scholarships. In July of 2004, a proposed revision was taken to the Board Policy Committee. Why? Staff returning from SEWAC and other conferences were sharing what they learned and asking whether the District would ever address the questions about grading in any systemic manner. The proposed policy was never intended to be a final recommendation, but rather a discussion starter. The administration was given direction to table that version for now and design a process to include greater input and opportunity for discussion of the issues by all staff, parents and students.

## Materials Used in the Study

Meanwhile, the literature continued to pour in and some additional books were published that continued to show us that much of what we were doing as grading practices really had little basis in research. In some cases, it just plain lacked common professional sense. So to be helpful, a small grading study committee (teachers and administrators) was formed to continue to look at the topic. Materials, articles and books were collected and two three ring binders were sent in multiple copies to all sites for study. These materials and a 'charge' to our leadership team began the discussions.

This "small kit of grading stuff" as it was once referred to, was designed with the intent to stimulate thinking, help professional dialogue, and ultimately lead to some better policy and practice on the subject of grading. In addition to several books, the kit contained the task, history and discussion questions, some draft policy language, and 27 articles and power points from some of the best thinkers on the subject in the country. Many of these experts have been writing and speaking on the topic for the last two decades. Since grading is a topic with much complexity, it was estimated that a twelve to twenty-four month period would be needed to encourage thinking and sharing as well as gathering more input. It has ended up being a two and one half year journey to get to where we are today. So what input was expected?

## Site and Professional Input

Principals were instructed to gather input from students, parents and staff. Site council discussions were carried out often bringing out a particular parent's biases, historical experience and beliefs. Input from teachers ranged from 'please help me do better in this area' to 'I have done my grading system this way for 20 years'. Information was sifted and winnowed by the grading committee and others. Periodic reports were given to the Board Policy Committee. Although Board policy will need to be changed in the near future, what is important is that the issues are crystallized and best practices be made known. Thus we now have this first version guide. We anticipate biennial updates since the research and best practice streams continue to flow.

### The Major Areas Considered in the Study

Grading practices must be reflective of student achievement in a given subject area. Components not related to student performance should not affect student grades. Summative assessments include products and performances reflective of students' knowledge and skills at the end of a time period or unit of study. Summative assessments are used as the primary component of grades that accurately reflect student performance. Multiple forms of summative assessments need to be administered to provide the most accurate picture. Final exams or end of course exams, although an acceptable component of student grades, should not be the main or only form of summative assessment. Homework is used to provide practice opportunities for students and is typically not used as a component of an achievement grade unless some specific homework could be considered a summative assessment. Formative assessments are tools used to provide teachers with information about the strengths and struggles of students in order to adjust teaching to meet student needs. Formative assessments are not used within grade calculations. To address these and other topics, we have created chapters called "Issues" in the guide. Topics include:

- Collaboration and consistency
- Criterion referenced grading
- Determining grades and grade averaging  
(Tom Gusky said, "in karate, if you go from a white belt to a black belt, do you get a grey belt")
- Communicating expectations and grading practices
- The role and grading of homework (students who pass tests, are proficient or advanced on WKCE, but fail classes due to zeroes on homework and vice versa)
- Missing work and late work
- The type, role, amount and use of extra credit
- The use of zero's in grading and what scales we should use.

This is not an exhaustive list. Through our new teacher development program, required coursework includes time spent on learning UBD, differentiation, and the development of authentic assessments. Required professional development regarding these issues has become part of our expectations for all leaders. We are in a multi year staff development plan for district administrators and other leaders focusing on these issues. We have begun addressing the consistency issues as departments work on common assessments at the end of the unit, quarter, or semester. Discussions have also commenced in teacher teams, departments, and other professional learning communities regarding the issues on grading those assessments at all levels.

### First or Second Order Change as it Applies to Assessment and Grading

How much change is needed in our grading and reporting practices and how fast can changes be made? Systemically or personally, the answer is in studying the phenomenon. "First-order change is incremental. It can be thought of as the next most obvious step to take in a school or district. Second-order change is anything but incremental. It involves dramatic departures from the expected, both in defining a given problem and in finding a solution." (Marzano, Waters, McNulty, 2005). They go on to call some change "incremental" and others "deep". In reviewing

best practices in grading, it is our committees' thought that it most likely falls somewhere in between. Put another way, using Ronald Heifetz's classification of type one, two, and three problems. It could be viewed that improving practices in grading is not a type one problem where traditional solutions are available and known but rather a type two problem. A type two problem is one where there is good definition of the problem, but no clear, cut immediate solution is available – thus, working toward a better practice gradually by professional dialogue and study. For reference, a type three problem is one where current ways of thinking do not provide any solution. Quick fixes may be available in some areas, but others will take groups of professionals working together to improve.

Assessment of student work is a collaborative ongoing process that involves reflection and feedback. Its goal is to help teachers analyze student work to improve instructional decisions and, thus students' learning. Student work is defined as any data or evidence teachers collect that reveals information about student learning.

#### Expectations and Use of the Guide (or what is tight and what is loose)

There is a need to examine our own biases, prejudices and preconceptions in the grading arena. The climate needs to support that self reflection. In a learning organization, trial and error should be encouraged. Innovation occurs when people work together to solve problems and improve practices on multiple fronts. The issue of grading student work is only one of those fronts.

We often talk about what is tight (all must do) and what is loose (some choice allowed). Expectations are that professional staff be familiar with the content and practices in this guide. Additional resources are also contained in the binders, books and bibliographies referred to earlier or included in this work. Over a two year period, leaders will discuss and work with staff to use and apply the concepts and practices. This, coupled with some upcoming changes in School Board Policy, should allow all of us to learn and grow.

\*\*\*\*\*

This document has multiple roots, authors, reviewers, critics and contributors. Over the past thirty six months, many articles and documents were reviewed. Some staff formed collegial studies or whole faculty study groups and others shared articles and discussed them at staff meetings. Others just routed materials and dealt with grading questions in their grade level or subject area department meetings. Still others made sure that parents and students were included where appropriate. This activity culminated in a process of gathering input from each site collected by the building principal.

The input was forwarded to a central location with the committee listed below voluntarily sifting and sorting for the best ideas and criticisms to eventually include in the final first draft. In the spring of 2006, the synthesis of information from the sites began and ended with a first draft of this document. We then asked several people listed below as 'draft reviewers' to also review the work and make further suggestions and recommend any final edits.

The work is meant to be a start, with additions and revisions expected as we learn more and work with the content. Future work on grading and reporting may include

- self assessment of grading practices
- finding time for PLCs (professional learning communities)
- strategies for dealing with change
- strategies for dealing with resistance
- best practices in homework
- more examples of grading practices to help teach the concepts.

It is anticipated that as the document and its ideas are used, additional best practices will emerge or be discovered for use in future editions.

The Grading Synthesis (from site input) Committee: Rob Bennett, Eileen Depka, MaryAnn Krause, Jill Land, Abby Grimm, Rich Mertes, Jill Ries, Kathy Stonitsch, Bob Willis, Jim Haessly

Draft Reviewers: Jennie Lamb, Dana Monogue, Sara Behrendt, Mike Bralick, Gloria Lake, Heidi Laabs, Ryan Champeau, Tony Brazouski, Eva Shaw, Catherine Sawicki, Glenda Conforti, Rosie Merchle, Lori Staniszewski, Jamie Walz, and many others who engaged in discussion or preferred not to be named

September 2009 Version #2: Jill Ries, Dacia Hopfensberger, Jennifer Wimmer, Wendy Liska, Sarah Drzewiecki, and Ben Hunsanger

Version #2 additional information:

As part of our study for Version #1, the School District of Waukesha teams listed above reviewed multiple literature sources and consulted with nationally recognized authorities on grading and assessment. In particular, we wish to credit the work of Thomas R. Guskey, Ken O'Connor, Robert J. Marzano, Carol Ann Tomlinson, Grant Wiggins, Rick DuFour and Doug Reeves.

School districts around the state, nationally and internationally are on a journey to improve assessment for learning by examining grading practices. School districts all tackle this complex issue as an opportunity to question well-entrenched personal views of teachers differently. In our Waukesha drive to improvement achievement for all and decrease achievement discrepancies for subgroups, we too looked at other school districts' work. Almost all school districts are beginning discussions, forming study groups, changing policy, or implementing new grading systems. In various stages of development, districts we and the national professionals have found include: **Grand Island, Nebraska;** Panama City, Florida; **Bremerton, Washington;** Sweetwater Union, California; Branksome Haal, Toronto, Ontario; **North Canton, Ohio;** St. Michaels, Victoria, British Columbia; Foxcroft, Maine; **North Union, Ohio;** Penticton, British Columbia; and more locally **Arrowhead, Elmbrook, Kettle Moraine, and Whitefish Bay,** Wisconsin.

## ***ISSUE #1: Practice / Effective Practice Guideline: Collaboration and Consistency Around Grading***

***The Essential Questions:*** What is true collaboration? How can consistency affect student achievement?

True collaboration means moving from collegiality to conversations around what matters for student achievement. Deprivatization of teaching practice is essential to true collaboration. Working in professional learning communities with colleagues provides an opportunity for collaboration. True PLC's focus on using data to identify gaps and develop instructional practice to close the identified gaps.

Common assessments are in place for several curricular areas and are being developed for the remaining areas. These common assessments are essential to continue the conversation regarding common course expectations and outcomes. Appropriately teaching targets and power standards will be agreed upon and articulated. This allows a student that transfers schools within the District, to find the same course content and objectives to work towards at any school they attend. The differences the student may possibly experience are how the outcomes are taught. It is important to remember that as instructors the "what" is developed by the district and the department. How you get students to reach the "what" is developed by the instructor, and that is the "how". Consistency in assessment and grading practices increases fairness for all students. The guidelines address core practices that are essential to consistency throughout the District. Consistency improves communication from teacher to teacher and teacher to parent. These are the important issues that collaboration will focus on. The number one goal of collaboration is student learning.

There is significant amount of research supporting the premise that PLC's incorporating the six components identified by Dufour and Eaker (1998), link to positive changes in teacher performance and student achievement. The components include reform based organization into study groups or mentoring, collaboration between teachers from the same department or grade level, the coherence of linking professional development to the school goals, a focus on developing expertise in teaching, opportunities for viewing student work, sustained time and duration for the study group or collaborative teams to meet.

Another system being used to improve learning is Collaborative Analysis of Student Learning (CASL). It is a "system designed to help teachers analyze student work to improve instructional decisions and, thus, students' learning. Student work is defined as any data or evidence teachers collect that reveals information about student learning (e.g., standardized test data, classroom assessments, writing samples, projects, oral reports, videotapes, pictures and student observation data). As part of the system, teachers join a study group to interpret and document students' progress toward local learning standards and reflect upon how students learn as well as upon their own professional growth.

When the analysis focuses on the same students over an extended period of time, teachers make discoveries about how students construct meaning of key concepts and skills. As a result of the insights and skills gained through this system, teachers become much more purposeful about selecting instructional and curriculum approaches, moving students ever closer to the appropriate learning outcomes."

**"The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is developing the ability for school personnel to function as professional learning communities."  
DuFour & Eaker**

The application of collaborative practices is a must. For meaningful application individual attitudes and practices must aim towards professional growth and student achievement.

***Sources / Articles (Available in Binder(s)/Principal's Office):***

- Twadell, E. (2006). *From Good to Great: Laying the Foundation of a Professional Learning Community*. Presentation for Summer Academy. Waukesha, WI
- Marzano, R., Pickering, D., Pollock, J. (2001). *Classroom Instruction that Works*. Alexandria, VA.: Association for Curriculum and Development
- Montgomery County Public Schools. (2006). *Learning, Grading, and Reporting Guidelines*. Rockville, MD.
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- O'Connor, K. (2002). *How to Grade for Learning*. Glenview, IL. :Pearson Education
- Principal's Research Review. (2006). *Principal's Research Review. Implementing Professional Learning Teams*, NASSP 1(5): September.
- Langer, Georgea M, Amy Bernstein, and Goff, Loretta S, (2003) *Collaborative Analysis of Student Work: Improving Teaching and Learning*, Alexandria, VA.: Association for Curriculum and Development

***Effective Possible Best Practices for collaboration:***

- Working in pure professional learning communities
- Using data for study
- Developing collaborative practices
- Shaping instruction based on student data
- Developing common assessments
- Identifying common targets

***Practices that inhibit learning from collaboration:***

- Using collaboration time to focus on the three C's- calendar, consequences, and choices
- Working in a congenial manner instead of in true collaborative manner (see attached side by side of PLCs and 'normal' collaboration).

True Professional Learning Communities vs. Congenial Collaboration

<b>PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES</b>	<b>CONGENIAL COLLABORATION</b>
Structured	Unorganized
Time bound	Timeless or un-timed
Data driven	Opinion loaded – no measurable data
Progress is measured regularly	No measurement of progress
There is a “unrelenting pursuit of excellence” (Good To Great and the Social Sectors, Collins 11/2005)	Excellence is unintended but sometimes happens
Change is embraced as necessary for improvement	Love of the status quo
Piercing fundamental purpose (‘this is very important’)	Preponderance of purposelessness (‘things are ok the way they are’)
A learning organization by design	Learning occurs by chance
Mutual interdependence (‘can’t do it alone’)	Required collegiality feels forced
Focuses on student achievement	Focuses on the deadly C’s: calendars, choices, consequences (Erik Twadell)
Conscious choice and discipline – builds leadership capacity in	We await direction
Mission oriented (‘this is just what we do’)	We believe in what we do now’
Vision oriented (‘this is what we can become at best’)	‘We are pretty good now’
Values driven (‘we have our agreed upon rules of operation’)	‘We will meet when we have time’
Supports teaching with group reflection	Allows or supports teaching in isolation
Believes in collaborative analysis of student work	Believes a single teacher always has final say
Sets SMART goals	Goals are <u>not</u> specific, measurable, attainable, results oriented and time bound
Peer coaching is valued and practiced	Only administrators should coach teachers
Collaborative reflection	Individual reflection
No single killer innovation or magic moment but momentum builds on previous work and previous momentum	Looks for the single answer
Conscious decision to do what is right based on inner discipline	No focus – little mission or drive
Collaboration heavy	Collaboration light – congenial

They collectively consider and.....

Have a ‘stop doing’ list –what doesn’t fit the hedgehog concept (piercing insight that allows them to see through complexity and discern underlying patterns. Hedgehogs see what is essential, and ignore the rest), they eliminate the least important 20% of any activity (Collins, 2001)	Have a to do list only and keeps adding to what we have
Know the core values of the organization	Act without knowledge of or outside of core values
Instill creative tension and it helps take small positive steps toward growth	View tension as a problem

## ***ISSUE #2: Practice / Effective Practice Guideline: Criterion Referenced Grading***

***The Essential Questions:*** What does criterion referenced grading mean? How can criterion referenced grades be applied to everyday grading?

Criterion referenced grades are based on measuring a student against a level of performance, not measuring one student against another student. This means looking at how a student is performing today compared to how the student performed the day before that. Criterion referenced means setting a defined target for students to hit, and then measuring their progress according to how close they come to hitting the target. Criteria and targets provide “stable and clear points of reference.” (Wiggins, 1994).

**“Grading on a curve tells very little about what students can do.”  
O’Connor**

The application for criterion grading is providing students with rubrics and scoring guides that set the criteria for mastery. Students are then able to demonstrate their knowledge according to the pre-determined objective/objectives. Instructors are then able to grade a student against the pre-determined target and not other students. For criterion grading, it is important that rubrics are used consistently and that there is clarity in the presented objectives. As Stiggins says, “Eliminate the mystery surrounding the meaning of success in your classroom by letting your students see your vision. If they can see it they can hit it. But if they cannot see it their challenge turns into a pin the tail on the donkey- blindfolded, of course.”

Reflecting on the fairness of grading practices sparks thought to the concept of criterion referenced grading. Using criterion referenced grading contributes to consistency and fairness in grading. It also promotes growth in students instead of competition between students.

### ***Sources / Articles (Available in Binder(s)/Principal’s Office):***

- O’Connor, K. (2002). *How to Grade for Learning*. Glenview, IL. Pearson Education
- Marzano, R. (2001). Pickering, D., Pollock, J. *Classroom Instruction that Works*. Alexandria, VA.: Association for Curriculum and Development
- Montgomery County Public Schools. (2004). *Learning, Grading, and Reporting Guidelines*. Rockville, MD.
- Stiggins, R., (2001). *Student-Involved Classroom Assessment*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall
- Wiggins, G., 1994. Toward Better Report Cards. *Educational Leadership*, October, 29-37.

### ***Effective Best Practices for Criterion Referenced Grading:***

- Use rubrics and clear targets
- Provide students with the learning objectives/goals ahead of time
- Provide exemplars or anchor papers for students to view achievement levels
- Grade students against mastery of the objectives

***Practices that inhibit learning:***

- Not providing objectives or targets
- Grading students against a norm-referenced curve
- Not using rubrics for scoring student work
- Grading by comparing students to each other

### ***ISSUE #3: Practice / Effective Practice Guideline: Determining Grades***

***The Essential Questions:*** How do you consistently and fairly determine grades? What constitutes an academic grade vs. nonacademic grade? How do you effectively grade special needs students?

Course grades must be based solely on academic achievement. O'Connor (2002) states that "Achievement demonstrates knowledge, skills and behaviors that are stated as learning goals for a course or unit of instruction." Student achievement can include but not be limited to, projects, portfolios, presentations, and varied forms of assessments. Several of our departments and other groups of teachers at all levels have developed common assessments. These common assessments are also appropriate for academic grading.

Importantly, participation and effort are non-academic and should not be graded as academic achievement. Participation grades and effort grades often include things like attendance and behavior. As we seek to fully implement common standards of achievement into instruction, it is not appropriate to grade student on non-academic achievement in an academic grade. In order for grades to reflect what students know and can do, grades must only reflect the student's level of academic achievement.

Using zeros as grades is an ineffective and potentially damaging practice in a 100 point scale. Using a zero for a student's grade does not accurately reflect what the student does or does not know. Proportionally there is a significant difference between grades other than F's and 0's. For example there is a difference from a 70 to a 77 between a D and a C. There is a difference from 0 to 69 for students that are receiving a failing grade. The gap between 0 to 69 is extremely wide, unlike the gap between 70 to 77 which is quite narrow. Said another way, there are equal intervals from 100 down to 70, and then on very large interval. This gap can create a serious and potentially dangerous situation for students. Assigning a zero could decimate a student's grade. Contrary to popular belief, assigning a zero actually serves to demotivate students of all ages. Using grades as weapons is ineffective and detrimental.

Students with special needs include students with disabilities, ELL students, and G/T students. Guskey (2001) argues for making specific grading adaptations. "In regards to students with disabilities, change the grading criteria, provide supplemental information and use alternate grading options, such as pass/fail. For ELL students, individualize the adaptation process and use accurate and reliable evidence. Also, clearly communicate accommodations made in assessment and reporting procedures. In regards to G/T students, adding a supplemental form based on specific learning goals will offer parents individualized information about their son/daughter's abilities and talents."

Research demonstrates over and over that basing student grades on a bell curve or average is not a fair way to determine their academic achievement. Using the median or mode to calculate grades will create a system that rewards either the most often or more recent performances. Also, applying weight to assignment/project/assessment grades will place importance on important instructional concepts and learning goals. This helps to fairly apply that importance of that particular work to the grade. Another alternative is using a grade of I or incomplete. This allows students an opportunity to finish work therefore teaching them responsibility.

**"Use the photo album approach not a snapshot approach to grading student learning."  
Tomlinson and McTighe**

Finally, reflecting on the purpose of grades will help to clear the air. The true purpose of grading is to communicate a student's academic achievement. Including anything other than academic achievement is simply unfair and can do unforeseen damage.

***Sources / Articles (Available in Binder(s)/Principal's Office):***

- Guskey, T. (October 2004). Zero Alternatives. *Principal Leadership*, 49-53
- Guskey, T., Bailey. J. (2001). *Developing Grading and Reporting Systems for Student Learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Corwin Press
- Montgomery County Public Schools. (2004). *Learning, Grading, and Reporting Guidelines*. Rockville, MD.
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- Reeves, D. (2006). *The Learning Leader: How to Focus School Improvement for Better Results*. Alexandria, VA.: Association for Curriculum and Instruction

***Effective Possible Best Practices for Determining Grades:***

- Using median or mode instead of always mean for calculating grades
- Using multiple ways to assess students
- Using the photo album approach vs. the snapshot approach
- Weighting project grades helps to create a fair system (see O'Connor, pg 146-147)
- Using an I (Incomplete) and giving students the opportunity to redo their work

***Practices that inhibit learning:***

- Using grades as punishment does not work and does not create responsibility
- Averaging grades is not fair, it can give an inaccurate picture of student achievement
- Using zeros as grades in a 60 to 100 or 70 to 100 scale vs. a 1,2,3,4 scale makes unequal intervals
- Basing grades on things like attendance, attitude and work habits is not an accurate account of what students have learned academically, and is unfair

## ***ISSUE #4: Practice / Effective Practice Guideline: Communicating Expectations and Grading Practices***

***The Essential Questions:*** What does communication of expectations and grading practices look like?

Students and parents will benefit from open lines of communication regarding expectations and grading. Students and parents will be informed of curricular expectations at the beginning of a course grade level or marking period. At a minimum, parents and students will be informed at the beginning of a semester or year. It is well known that students can hit virtually any target that is presented to them. In contrast, if they are aiming in the dark several of them will surely miss the target. Grade level teams and teachers teaching synonymous courses shall communicate and apply consistent expectations and practices. It is unfair to expect a student to guess at their learning targets and subsequently penalize them if they do not meet them. Our ultimate unbending purpose is positive student achievement, so setting clear targets is meaningful and of the utmost importance.

There are many appropriate ways to communicate expectations, one of which is the course syllabus. In addition, things like assignment notebooks, journals and weekly newsletters are also viable means of communicating pertinent information and expectations.

The Webgrader system using webnotes is another way to communicate. The use of an online grading program allows parents and students to access current information regarding homework, grades and assignments. The use of such a program will serve to increase student responsibility for their work, and in turn, increase parent's confidence in the school system. Creating a situation in which parents can provide the necessary feedback to their children regarding grades, assignments, and achievement will, in the long run, increase student achievement. Although not all parents have the desire, or necessary resources available to utilize Webgrader, it does provide the necessary start in attaining more involvement in student achievement. (Scott, 2002) In addition, this system provides information to teachers and administrators creating the necessary information to track students that are having difficulty. The up-to-date information on individual students can effectively be used to shape instruction practice and meet the student's present level of performance.

When students are informed of the targets and methods of assessment the likelihood of student success is increased greatly. The element of surprise or 'pop quiz' is not an appropriate way to try to affect students. Using grading to create punitive situations has shown to decrease student motivation. Fairness means making all students aware of the goals and objectives they will be expected to accomplish.

**“Create the  
Nintendo  
effect, use  
immediate  
and  
meaningful  
feedback.”  
Jeff Howard**

***Sources / Articles (Available in Binder(s)/Principal's Office):***

- O'Connor, K. (2002). *How to Grade for Learning*. Glenview, IL. Pearson Education
- Marzano, R. (2000). *Transforming Classroom Grading*. Alexandria, VA.: Association for Curriculum and Development
- Marzano, R. (2001). Pickering, D., Pollock, J. *Classroom Instruction that Works*. Alexandria, VA.: Association for Curriculum and Development
- Montgomery County Public Schools. (2004). *Learning, Grading, and Reporting Guidelines*. Rockville, MD.
- Scott, Terry, Kathy Briggs, Belinda Foster. (2002) "Existing Research." California State University. Retrieved October 17, 2006  
<http://imet.csus.edu/imet4/camtasia/existingresearch.htm>

***Great provisions of Webgrader from Waukesha teachers:***

- Equitable and reasonable grading
- The use of percentage, rubric and mixed grading methods
- Grades can be determined by cumulative points or weighted grade points
- Categories can be chosen to allow for weighting items differently, i.e. homework, projects, daily assignments, and tests
- There is a connection to State and District standards
- There are many reports that can be utilized to demonstrate student learning
- Teachers can use a four point scale, district 100 point scale, and modified scales with 60 being the bottom rather than 0

***Effective Possible Best Practices for communicating expectations:***

- Communicating expectations and goals in a written format
- Expressing clear and concise expectations
- Being repetitive
- Rubrics are shared prior to the lesson
- Involve students in creating rubrics

***Practices that inhibit learning from communicating expectations:***

- Playing "gotcha" with expectations
- Only communicating expectations verbally
- Not communicating methods for determining grades

## ***ISSUE #5: Practice / Effective Practice Guideline: Homework and Extra Credit***

***The Essential Questions:*** What are the various types of homework? What homework should be graded? What is the maximum weight homework should be given in a final grade?

There are four types of relevant homework. These four types of homework are homework for practice, homework as preparation for learning, homework as an extension of learning, and homework as true assessment.

Homework for practice consists of homework that extends the learning from the classroom. Concepts that were taught in class can be practiced and expanded upon through homework. This type of homework can serve to enrich the student's knowledge base and inform their continued learning.

Homework as preparation for learning is an opportunity for students to share their prior knowledge and existing background knowledge with you. This form of homework gives students time to reach into their long-term memory and retrieve meaningful information related to the concepts.

Homework as an extension of learning serves to solidify concepts taught in the classroom. This type of homework provides students an opportunity to expand upon the learning they participated in during class.

Homework as a true assessment takes on a slightly different application. This form of homework is an assessment of the concepts taught in class. This may mean a take home assessment. The purpose of this type of assessment is to shape instruction. By assessing one can get real and meaningful information on student's strengths and weaknesses. This serves to help shape the instruction around student needs. However, there is caution with this type of homework. Do not let the word assessment fool you into thinking that you must assign a grade to the assessment. As with all homework, homework as a true assessment does not need to be graded. If homework is graded it is essential that it is viewed as part of a student's "photo album" and graded according to that holistic approach.

Homework as an extra credit option that is not attached to student learning is not an appropriate way to apply the principles of meaningful homework to increase student achievement. Practices such as bringing items for the teacher, classroom supplies (tissues for example), 'points' for turning fees or forms in on time, attending fundraisers or sporting events for points are all completely inappropriate and not allowed.

Best practice documents indicate that homework for practice or preparation should not include more than 10% of the grade.

Overall it is important to reflect on the facts that homework should be viewed as primarily formative, and therefore provide students with opportunities for investigation and a synthesis of learning without consequence. Homework plays a relevant and important part in student learning when it is applied appropriately.

**“Homework should be a risk-free chance to experiment with new skills.” (Carr and Farr, 2002).**

***Sources / Articles (Available in Binder(s)/Principal's Office):***

- O'Connor, K. (2002). *How to Grade for Learning*. Glenview, IL. Pearson Education
- Marzano, R. (2000). *Transforming Classroom Grading*. Alexandria, VA.: Association for Curriculum and Development
- Marzano, R. (2001). Pickering, D., Pollock, J. *Classroom Instruction that Works*. Alexandria, VA.: Association for Curriculum and Development
- Montgomery County Public Schools. (2004). *Learning, Grading, and Reporting Guidelines*. Rockville, MD.
- Kohn, A. (September 2006). Abusing Research: The Study of Homework and Other Examples. *Phi Delta Kappan*, Pgs. 9-22

***Effective Possible Best Practices for homework:***

- It should be directly related to instructional objectives and concepts
- Allow for practice of new skills and knowledge without penalty
- Provide an opportunity to demonstrate practice without consequence
- Enrich and deepen students background knowledge
- Expand or integrate learned knowledge
- An opportunity for students to receive timely and meaningful feedback on their work
- It should allow for mistakes, as mistakes are important to learning
- You should let students know when homework is for practice or assessment

***Practices that inhibit learning from homework:***

- Using it for punitive consequences
- Not relating it to learning, i.e.- your homework is to bring in a box of Kleenex
- Rote memorization for homework does not translate to long-term learning
- No meaningful feedback
- Not allowing multiple opportunities to try a new concept without penalty
- Not communicating clearly regarding practice vs. assessment

## ***ISSUE #6: Practice / Effective Practice Guideline: Missing Work, Late Work and Zeros***

***The Essential Questions:*** What is appropriate grading for missing or late work? How can grades for missing and late work be appropriately assigned and communicated?

The true intent of teaching is learning. Students should be encouraged to finish their school work in preparation for developing content knowledge and academic achievement assessments. Since the goal of teaching is learning, it is far better to find ways to have students complete work rather than assigning a zero to missing or late work. In fact, if the punishment for not turning in work is actually completing the work the teacher and the students gain. An alternative to assigning zero's is assigning an incomplete. This is an alternative which gives students an opportunity to learn the content.

Take care in developing systems for record keeping. It is important to thoroughly communicate grading expectations. Clear definition between due dates and deadlines should be communicated. The same courses from school to school will share the same grading formulas. If homework is used as formative practice students should not be penalized for taking risks, including taking more time. Research shows that using grades as punishment actually serves to de-motivate students. O'Connor (2002) lists seven pointers for getting work in on time:

- Set reasonable and clear targets
- Ensure clear communication of tasks
- Support struggling students
- Find out why work is late and assist
- Establish reasonable consequences such as:
  - After school follow-up
  - Make up in a supervised setting
  - Parent contact
- Provide an opportunity for extended timelines
- If all else fails, use small deductions which do not distort achievement or motivation, not zeros

**No studies support low grades or marks as punishments, low grades more often cause students to withdraw from learning.  
O'Connor**

### ***Sources / Articles (Available in Binder(s)/Principal's Office):***

- Guskey, T. (October 2004). Zero Alternatives. *Principal Leadership*, 49-53
- O'Connor, K. (2002). *How to Grade for Learning*. Glenview, IL. Pearson Education
- Marzano, R. (2000). *Transforming Classroom Grading*. Alexandria, VA.: Association for Curriculum and Development
- Marzano, R. (2001). Pickering, D., Pollock, J. *Classroom Instruction that Works*. Alexandria, VA.: Association for Curriculum and Development

- Montgomery County Public Schools. (2004). *Learning, Grading, and Reporting Guidelines*. Rockville, MD.
- Reeves, D. (2006). *The Learning Leader*. Alexandria, VA.: Association for Curriculum and Development

***Effective Possible Best Practices for missing/late work/zeros:***

- Set reasonable timelines
- Find out why students are not meeting deadlines, help them
- Communicate all learning targets
- Refrain from using zeros when not using a four point scale

***Practices that inhibit learning from missing/late work/zeros:***

- Assigning punitive penalties
- Grading attitude and participation as achievement
- Providing unclear expectations
- Lowering a grade in a way that would inaccurately reflect achievement

## ***ISSUE #7: Practice / Effective Practice Guideline: Feedback***

***The Essential Questions:*** What constitutes meaningful feedback? How can I appropriately give feedback that will positively affect student achievement?

**“Feedback is  
the breakfast  
of  
champions.”  
Lombardi**

Effective feedback needs to be immediate and meaningful. In definition that means, feedback needs to be regular and specific, combined with guidance and directions that will help the students in making any needed improvements. Meaningful feedback is specific and formative, giving students information on the specific content and the necessary skills students need to apply to meet the learning goals.

Feedback that is timely and meaningful will have a direct impact on student achievement. Students are able to reach objectives if the objectives are clearly communicated to them. Feedback is the springboard to reaching the intended objective/objectives. Incremental feedback will assist students in making progress. The “Nintendo Effect” described by Jeff Howard gives us a comparable answer. What does Nintendo give a distracted and inattentive student that class instruction is not providing? Feedback, feedback that is specific, incremental and timely. At the end of each game the player knows exactly what they did wrong and how to improve for the next game. How many would keep playing if their scores were given to them a week or two later? How many would continue playing if they only received a score with no direction on what to do better next time?”

There are several ways to implement feedback as common practice in the classroom. The use of an analytical rubric helps to clarify learning expectations and goals for students. Cover sheets including checklists, along with developed common checklists help to create a feedback rich classroom. Encouraging student to student feedback will also serve to enrich the feedback environment.

It will be helpful to ask these questions when you are preparing to give a students feedback. What is the error? What is the probable reason for the error? How can I get students to avoid this error? What feedback can I give the students on their noteworthy work?

Importantly, remember that for feedback to be meaningful, it must be timely and specific. Incorporating feedback in the routine of the classroom will make it part of daily practice.

### ***Sources / Articles (Available in Binder(s)/Principal’s Office):***

- O’Connor, K. (2002). *How to Grade for Learning*. Glenview, IL. Pearson Education
- Marzano, R. (2000). *Transforming Classroom Grading*. Alexandria, VA.: Association for Curriculum and Development
- Marzano, R. (2001). Pickering, D., Pollock, J. *Classroom Instruction that Works*. Alexandria, VA.: Association for Curriculum and Development
- Montgomery County Public Schools. (2004). *Learning, Grading, and Reporting Guidelines*. Rockville, MD.
- Depka, E. (2006). *Presentation for All Leaders*. Waukesha, WI.

***Effective Possible Best Practices for feedback:***

- Comments comparing the current work with what is expected on the assignment or assessment
- Probing questions that cause the student to think about the task
- Pointing out positives and negatives as compared to the learning objectives
- Reminders about the specifics that will help students meet the target learning objectives

***Practices that inhibit learning:***

- Using grades as feedback
- Giving feedback late or untimely
- Giving nonspecific or general feedback

## ***ISSUE #8: Grading Practices for Special Populations/ Gifted and Talented / Students with Disabilities***

***The Essential Questions:*** How do I use grades and standards based report cards to communicate the academic progress of students with disabilities or students receiving gifted and talented programming?

Accurate information on learning progress is essential for all students. There is a large amount of research supporting the inclusion of students with disabilities and gifted students in the regular education classroom, however the grading of these students within the general education classroom can pose challenges. When students receive out of grade level instruction there is often confusion about whether grades should reflect effort, progress towards grade level standards, progress towards instructional level standards, or in the instance of special education students, progress towards IEP goals.

**“Before considering grading methods for specific students....schools must have a high quality grading and reporting system in place for all students.”  
Jung and Guskey**

For students with disabilities Jung and Guskey (2007) suggest the following process:

1. Determining if an accommodation or modification is needed to achieve the grade level standard (see attached chart).
2. Establish the appropriate modified standards for each area requiring a modification.
3. Apply best practice grading strategies to the appropriate standards.

For students of special populations communicating grades for work that is aligned to instruction provides meaningful information about the student’s achievement or progress. In subject areas where only accommodations (see attached comparison chart) are needed, students of special populations should receive grades according to the same criteria as all other students. Students should not receive a penalty for needing accommodations. For subject areas where modifications are required, grades should be based on the modified standards while still adhering to best practices in grading. In these instances clear communication of the grades is essential. An asterisk or indication that the grade is based on modified standards is necessary. According to the Office for Civil Rights (July 2006) when report cards are used to communicate student progress to parents (in comparison to transcripts which are used to communicate to post-secondary institutions) it is permissible to indicate that students are receiving modified curriculum. The report cards provided to students of special populations should be as meaningful as report cards provided to the all other students.

When grading students that are gifted and talented, thought and consideration regarding the type of work completed should be incorporated into the grading process. It is common to have gifted students working and learning far above grade level. The work completed at these high levels should be graded appropriately, and should not negatively affect their grade on a grade level report card. In addition, because gifted students often work above and beyond grade level curriculum the design of the work for these students takes special consideration. In designing the work for these students, aligning specifically to the standards rather than focusing on grade level work will help clarify the actual grading of the work.

Guskey (2001) suggests several key steps to consider when planning for gifted and talented student learning:

1. Establish procedures that allow gifted and talented students to demonstrate what they know and can do in relation to the curriculum.
2. Plan on curriculum alternatives that permit these students to proceed to more advanced levels of learning.
3. Implement these alternatives as enriched experiences within the regular classroom or as activities in specially assigned classes.

Importantly, the work that is specifically and specially designed for students above grade level should serve to meet the regular classroom standards and replace that work, not be added as addition to regular classroom instructional work. Students challenged at high levels need to be graded fairly at those high levels.

***Sources / Articles (Available in Binder(s)/Principal's Office):***

- LRP Publications. (1998). Bonus Report: Grading students in special education.
- California Department of Education. 47 IDELR 45 (July, 2006).
- Jung, L.A. & Guskey, T. R. (2007, April). Determining fair grades for students with special needs: A standards based model. Paper presented at annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.

***Effective Possible Best Practices for grading with special populations:***

- Equitable and meaningful grades
- Increased awareness of students instruction level vs grade level
- Clear distinction between the need for accommodations or modifications

***Practices that inhibit learning:***

- Providing modifications when accommodations are appropriate
- Lowering grades due to the use of accommodations within the classroom
- Not providing opportunities for students with disabilities to demonstrate understanding of grade level standards
- Reporting failing grades on grade level standards when instruction is not aligned with grade level standards
- Holding gifted and talented student accountable for double the work other students account for.

## **GRADING APPENDIX**

**Standards Based Grading:** In a standards based reporting system it is essential to consider the impact of grading scales and measures and their relation to measuring true academic achievement. The communication and application of grades is an important to all constituencies in our system. In relation to its importance, we have an obligation to provide the highest caliber relationship between student work, and academic achievement.

In this appendix you will find varying scales that communicate in different manners. Each scale has an application to our standards based system. This primary use of this appendix is for the classroom practitioner to select and use the appropriate scale for the instruction, the learning, and the process. Rubric scores offer a different and fair approach to the traditional five point scale. With a rubric score there are equal intervals between the numbers 0,1,2,3,4. When using a rubric these numbers are appropriate to apply as grades because as they are distributed evenly. The 0 does not have the same negative effect on a students' grade as in does in a five point scale with unequal intervals. In addition, the Elementary/Middle level scale offers younger learners more equality between the percentages.

Importantly the research shows that conversation and collaboration around grading is the best ways to develop fairness and consistency. In order to develop consistent rubrics for assessing the content area, teachers shall collaborate with grade level colleagues, other teachers instructing the same course, building administration, or department chairpersons in choosing the appropriate grading scale.

High School Transcribed Course Scale (Gr 9-12) Elementary/Middle School Scale (Gr 4-8)

Letter Grade	% 70-100% Scale	Decimal	Weighted	Letter Grade	% 60-100% Scale	Decimal
A+	99-100	4.33	5.33	A+	97-100	4.33
A	95-98	4.0	5.0	A	93-96	4.0
A-	93-94	3.67	4.67	A-	90-92	3.67
B+	91-92	3.33	4.33	B+	87-89	3.33
B	87-90	3.0	4.0	B	83-86	3.0
B-	85-86	2.67	3.67	B-	80-82	2.67
C+	83-84	2.33	3.33	C+	77-79	2.33
C	79-82	2.0	3.0	C	73-76	2.0
C-	77-78	1.67	2.67	C-	70-72	1.67
D+	75-76	1.33	1.33	D+	67-69	1.33
D	72-74	1.0	1.0	D	63-66	1.0
D-	70-71	.67	.67	D-	60-62	.67
F	63-69	0	0	F	50-59	0
Incomplete	0-62			Incomplete	0-49	

Rubric-Based Grading Scales

4 Point Scale	Decimal	K-6 Primary Level Scale
4	4.0	4=Independently demonstrates sophisticated application in new contexts
3	3.0	3=skills are consistently demonstrated
2	2.0	2=skills inconsistently demonstrated
1	1.0	1=skills are limited and require significant teacher help
		Not assessed at this time

**Sources / Articles:**

- Wormeli, R. (2006). Fair Isn't Always Equal. Stenhouse Publishers. Portland Maine.
- Bailey, T. & Guskey, T. R. (2007, April). Developing Grading and Reporting Systems for Student Learning.

**School District of Waukesha**  
**Best Practices in Grading – Condensed Version (1/07/09)**

<b><i>ISSUE #1/ Practice / Effective Practice Guideline: Collaboration and Consistency around Grading</i></b>	
Effective	Inhibits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working in pure professional learning communities</li> <li>• Using data for study</li> <li>• Developing collaborative practices</li> <li>• Shaping instruction based on student data</li> <li>• Developing common assessments</li> <li>• Identifying common targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using collaboration time to focus on the three C’s – calendar, consequences, and choices</li> <li>• Working in a congenial manner instead of in true collaborative manner (see attached side by side of PLC’s and “normal” collaboration)</li> </ul>
<b><i>ISSUE #2/ Practice / Effective Practice Guideline: Criterion Referenced Grading</i></b>	
Effective	Inhibits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use rubrics and clear targets</li> <li>• Provide students with the learning objectives/goals ahead of time</li> <li>• Provide exemplars or anchor papers for students to view achievement levels</li> <li>• Grade students against mastery of the objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not providing objectives or targets</li> <li>• Grading students against a norm-referenced curve</li> <li>• Not using rubrics for scoring student work</li> <li>• Grading by comparing students to each other</li> </ul>
<b><i>ISSUE #3/ Practice / Effective Practice Guideline: Determining Grades</i></b>	
Effective	Inhibits
<p>Using median or mode instead of always mean for calculating grades</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using multiple ways to assess students</li> <li>• Using the photo album approach vs. the snapshot approach</li> <li>• Weighting project grades helps to create a fair system (see O’Connor, pg. 146-147)</li> <li>• Using an I (Incomplete) and giving students the opportunity to redo their work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using grades as punishment does not work and does not create responsibility</li> <li>• Averaging grades is not fair, it can give an inaccurate picture of student achievement</li> <li>• Using zeros as grades in a 60 to 100 or 70 to 100 scale vs. a 1, 2, 3, 4 scale makes unequal intervals</li> <li>• Basing grades on things like attendance, attitude and work habits is not an accurate account of what students have learned academically, and is unfair</li> </ul>
<b><i>ISSUE #4/ Practice / Effective Practice Guideline: Communicating Expectations and Grading Practices</i></b>	
Effective	Inhibits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicating expectations and goals in a written format</li> <li>• Expressing clear and concise expectations</li> <li>• Being repetitive</li> <li>• Rubrics are shared prior to the lesson</li> <li>• Involve students in creating rubrics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing “gotcha” with expectations</li> <li>• Only communicating expectations verbally</li> <li>• Not communicating methods for determining grades</li> </ul>

***ISSUE #5/ Practice / Effective Practice Guideline: Homework and Extra Credit***

**Effective**

- It should be directly related to instructional objectives and concepts
- Allow for practice of new skills and knowledge without penalty
- Provide an opportunity to demonstrate practice without consequence
- Enrich and deepen students background knowledge
- Expand or integrate learned knowledge
- An opportunity for students to receive timely and meaningful feedback on their work
- It should allow for mistakes, as mistakes are important to learning
- You should let students know when homework is for practice or assessment

**Inhibits**

- Using it for punitive consequences
- Not relating it to learning, i.e.-your homework is to bring in a box of Kleenex
- Rote memorization for homework does not translate to long-term learning
- No meaningful feedback
- Not allowing multiple opportunities to try a new concept without penalty
- Not communicating clearly regarding practice vs. assessment

***ISSUE #6/ Practice / Practice / Effective Practice Guideline: Missing Work/Late Work/Zeros***

**Effective**

- Set reasonable timelines
- Find out why students are not meeting deadlines, help them
- Communicate all learning targets
- Refrain from using zeros when not using a four point scale

**Inhibits**

- Assigning punitive penalties
- Grading attitude and participation as achievement
- Providing unclear expectations
- Lowering a grade in a way that would inaccurately reflect achievement

***ISSUE #7/ Practice / Effective Practice Guideline: Feedback***

**Effective**

- Comments comparing the current work with what is expected on the assignment or assessment
- Probing questions that cause the student to think about the task
- Pointing out positives and negatives as compared to the learning objectives
- Reminders about the specifics that will help students meet the target learning objectives

**Inhibits**

- Using grades as feedback
- Giving feedback late or untimely
- Giving nonspecific or general feedback

***ISSUE #8/ Grading Practices for Special Populations/Gifted and Talented/Students with Disabilities***

**Effective**

- Equitable and meaningful grades
- Increased awareness of students instruction level vs. grade level
- Clear distinction between the need for accommodations or modifications

**Inhibits**

- Providing modifications when accommodations are appropriate
- Lowering grades due to the use of accommodations within the classroom
- Not providing opportunities for students with disabilities to demonstrate understanding of grade level standards
- Reporting failing grades on grade level standards when instruction is not aligned with grade level standards
- Holding gifted and talented student accountable for double the work other students account for

## School District of Waukesha Best Practices in Grading – Expected Practice

<i>Collaboration and Consistency around Grading</i>	
<p>Teaching in isolation is not an option in the School District of Waukesha. Professional staff participate on collaborative grade level, department , school and/or district teams.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All middle and high school teachers are required to meet in monthly PLC meetings after school hours.</li> <li>• Elementary staff meet quarterly in grade level teams.</li> </ul> <p>A district committee is working to provide embedded time for collaboration within our school day by the 2010-2011 school year.</p>	
Expected Practice	WebGrader Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working in pure professional learning communities promotes true collaboration that:</li> <li>• Identifies common learning targets used to guide teaching and learning</li> <li>• Creates formative and summative common assessments with a clear purpose</li> <li>• Discuss the results of formative and summative assessment data to shape instruction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin discussions with your team (grade level or course) related to WebGrader utilization</li> <li>• Determine what will be included in a grade</li> <li>• Identify assessment indicators</li> <li>• Develop categories</li> <li>• Determine weights by grade/department/course</li> <li>• Identify types of assignments that will be included in the actual grade</li> </ul>

<i>Criterion Referenced Grading</i>	
<p>The district is committed to a clearly articulated curriculum that is consistent across the district.</p>	
Expected Practice	WebGrader Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use established learning targets</li> <li>• Provide students with the learning objectives/goals ahead of time</li> <li>• Provide exemplars or anchor papers for students to view achievement levels</li> <li>• Grade students against mastery of the objectives</li> <li>• Utilize a rubric or scoring guide when possible</li> <li>• Provide criterion for mastery ahead of time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During setup, choose a mixed grading scale that allows for use of percentages and/or rubric (4 point available in WebGrader)</li> <li>• Explore the use of “trend” grading in WebGrader</li> </ul>

## Determining grades

We are committed to helping all students learn; therefore, students should be provided with multiple opportunities through assessment and daily work to demonstrate their skills.

- During 2009-2010 school year, all schools, departments, courses and/or grade levels will engage in consistent dialogue and practice so they are ready to implement a 5 point scale by 2010-2011. (5 point scale = 0, 1, 2, 3, 4) Report cards will be revised as needed.

Expected Practice	WebGrader Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using median, mode or trend data instead of always mean for calculating grades</li> <li>• Using multiple ways to assess students</li> <li>• Using the photo album approach vs. the snapshot approach</li> <li>• Weighting project grades helps to create a fair system</li> <li>• Using an I (Incomplete) and giving students the opportunity to redo their work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When entering student work, you may attach state standards or learning targets to the assignment. This will help determine a student's proficiency specific to the skill, standard or target.</li> <li>• WebGrader will reflect consistent grading scale and practice as determined by the department or grade level team.</li> <li>• WebGrader uses total points earned over total points possible when calculating grades. Weighted grades so weights are calculated automatically. in addition to those that are identified by teachers</li> </ul> <p>Example: WebGrader does not suggest entering all assignments as a percentage out of 100% because it utilizes a mathematically accurate calculation using total points earned over total points possible.</p> <p>80% on a 20 point assignment does not carry the same weight as an 80% on a 100 point assignment.</p> <p>Teachers can weight individual assignments within a category to stress the importance of it within the grading calculation (i.e. a 20 question/point test could be "multiplied" to increase it's weight in the overall grade)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently, an "I" translates to the parent view as NG (not graded) – will be revised in the future. For now, ensure parents understand the difference.</li> </ul>

***Communicating Expectations and Grading Practices***

Learning targets and grading practices should be clearly articulated to teachers, students, and parents as well as the community.

- The district website will be updated to show what we expect students to learn and how we will assess their learning.
- The district will provide newsletter items for each school to communicate effective and expected practice.
- Teachers communicate grading practices to students and parents via newsletters, class meetings, WebNotes, a beginning of the year syllabus, etc.

Expected Practice	WebGrader Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicating expectations and goals in a written format</li> <li>• Expressing clear and concise expectations</li> <li>• Being repetitive: same message and common theme</li> <li>• Rubrics are shared prior to the lesson</li> <li>• Involve students in creating rubrics</li> </ul>	<p>All learning targets and assignments should be clearly communicated in WebGrader so that proficiency and progress are easily and clearly communicated to students, parents, and other staff members needing to monitor student progress and learning</p> <p>It is considered best practice for learning targets or standards to be “attached” to assignments which can be viewed by students and parents in a ”standard report”</p> <p>All entries should be labeled so that students and parents can understand what the assignment was (i.e. use Unit 10 Chapter Final vs. #10)</p>

### ***Homework and Extra Credit***

Homework should meet criteria established within the larger Best Practice document.

- Effective fall 2010, extra credit will not be factored into student grades
- Effective 2010-2011, homework shall account for no more than 10% of a student's grade.

Expected Practice	WebGrader Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Homework should be directly related to instructional objectives and concepts</li><li>• Homework should be viewed as formative, allowing for practice of new skills and knowledge without penalty</li><li>• Provide an opportunity to demonstrate practice without consequence</li><li>• Enrich and deepen students background knowledge</li><li>• Expand or integrate learned knowledge</li><li>• Provide an opportunity for students to receive timely and meaningful feedback on their learning progress</li><li>• Allow for mistakes without penalty, as mistakes are important to learning</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Set weight for homework as 10% or less</li><li>• Consider creating a "Practice" category that has 0% weight – creating a place for you to record homework completion, but not penalize the student for practice (i.e. record scores so you have a record of student learning, but do not include in the final grade calculation)</li><li>• Consider using "unassign" or "excused" to drop an item from the grade calculation to prevent practice from overly affecting a student grade</li><li>• Consider setting preferences to drop the lowest score from a category</li><li>• Analyze the trend score to look for growth. Trend growth can be accessed at any time related to standards or learning targets that have been attached to more than three assignments. Trend must be set up in the grade book under teacher options.</li></ul>

<b><i>Missing Work/Late Work/Zeros</i></b>	
<p>All best practice from the District Best Practice in Grading document should be implemented by fall of 2010-2011. We continue to work collaboratively with WebGrader to refine the process in which we identify missing work.</p> <p>It is important to communicate any missing or late work to students and parents.</p>	
Expected Practice	WebGrader Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set reasonable timelines</li> <li>• Find out why students are not meeting deadlines, help them</li> <li>• Communicate all learning targets</li> <li>• Refrain from using zeros when not using an equal interval scale</li> <li>• Giving a zero in essence “lets a student off the hook”, continue to hold students accountable and support them in completing their work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use defined comments to indicate missing or late work.</li> <li>• Late does not affect grade calculations; however, missing will be automatically converted to a zero. When the assignment is turned in, scores can be changed.</li> <li>• If no work is turned in, teachers must take action on the existing zero in the grade book. You can “unassign” or clear the score so the assignment is not calculated in the total grade. You could score the item as a 50% F to minimize impact.</li> <li>• Set preferences to send an automatic Web Note alert when an assignment is marked as missing or late.</li> <li>• An “I” is assigned automatically for grades that fall below a certain mark.</li> <li>• If you use “incomplete” as a defined comment, communicate with students and parents to use the “detail report” to see incomplete work vs NG “Not Graded”</li> <li>• At this time, WebGrader recognizes an incomplete assignment and the parent view shows NG indicating “Not Graded”.</li> </ul>

<b><i>Feedback</i></b>	
<p>Professional development will continue through Assessment for Learning principles. Effective practice (as related to feedback) should be implemented by fall 2010.</p>	
Expected Practice	WebGrader Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comments comparing the current work with what is expected on the assignment or assessment</li> <li>• Using probing questions that cause the student to think about the task</li> <li>• Pointing out strengths and areas of need as compared to the learning objectives</li> <li>• Reminders about the specifics that will help students meet the target learning objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timely input of grades/marks and the use of comments, Web Notes, etc. support timely feedback</li> <li>• The use of unique comments can provide immediate feedback</li> <li>• Narrative comments (elementary) can also support effective feedback on the report card</li> </ul>

***Grading Practices for Special Populations: Students with Disabilities  
Gifted and Talented***

Regular and special education teachers will need to collaborate to determine individual student needs for instruction, modifications or accommodations, and grading. Student progress should be noted toward grade or course expectations and clearly communicated to both students and parents.

- Elementary special education teachers are able to grade “out of level” learners on one report card.

Expected Practice	WebGrader Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equitable and meaningful grades</li> <li>• Increased awareness of students instruction level vs. grade level</li> <li>• Clear distinction between the need for accommodations or modifications</li> <li>• Provide multiple and varied opportunities for students with disabilities to demonstrate understanding of grade level standards</li> <li>• Students receive differentiated instructional material that is engaging and challenging (not more if you’re GT and less if your SLD)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize trend grade to see growth of individual students over time</li> <li>• Do not mark students as receiving special services</li> <li>• Comments can include that accommodation or modifications were made to an assignment</li> <li>• Defined comments can be created to indicate modifications to assignments</li> </ul>

### **A Repair Kit: Fixes for Broken Grades**

*From Ken O'Connor's presentation on grading at the Sally Ride Academy, Waukesha, 2006*

#### **Fixes for ingredients that distort achievement:**

1. Don't include student behavior (effort, participation, etc.) in grades; include only achievement.
2. Don't reduce marks on "work" submitted late; provide support.
3. Don't give points for extra credit or use bonus points; seek evidence of a higher level of achievement.
4. Don't punish academic dishonesty with reduced grades; apply behavioral consequences and reassess.
5. Don't consider attendance in grade determination; record only absences.
6. Don't include group scores in grades; use only individual achievement evidence.

#### **Fixes for low quality or poorly organized evidence:**

7. Don't organize information around assessment methods; use standards/learning goals.
8. Don't assign grades using inappropriate or unclear performance standards; provide clear descriptions.
9. Don't assign grades based on student's achievement compared to other students; use absolute standards.
10. Don't rely on evidence from assessments that fail to meet standards of quality; check against standards.

#### **Fixes for inappropriate number crunching:**

11. Don't be a "mean" teacher relying on "the average" – consider other measures of central tendency (median and mode).
12. Don't include zeros as a reflection of lack of achievement or as punishment; use alternatives, such as Incomplete.

#### **Fixes to support the learning process:**

13. Don't use information from formative assessments and practice to determine grades; use only summative evidence.
14. Don't accumulate evidence over time and use all of it when learning is developmental and it will grow with time and repeated opportunities; emphasize recent achievement.
15. Don't leave students out of the grading process – they can play key roles that promote achievement; involve students.

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