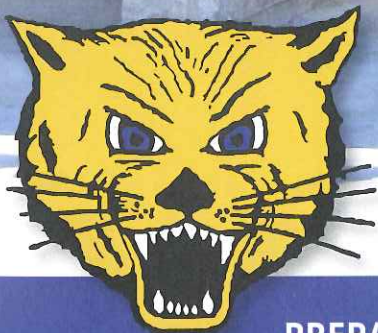


GRADING PRACTICES: EFFECTIVE STUDENT FEEDBACK

LAKE MILLS HIGH SCHOOL



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PREPARING ALL OF TODAY'S STUDENTS FOR TOMORROW'S OPPORTUNITIES.

GRADING PRACTICES: EFFECTIVE STUDENT FEEDBACK



EFFECTIVE STUDENT FEEDBACK

At LMHS, we have a responsibility to provide all students with the same rigorous curriculum. Teachers use grading to identify the strengths and weaknesses of students. This information is used by teachers to plan high quality, meaningful instruction for all students. Students use information from grading feedback to reflect on, evaluate their progress, and to set goals. We expect that all students in our district will grow and improve toward proficiency in the standards.

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH FOR GRADING FOR LEARNING PRACTICES?

Research on grading practices clearly shows that the most effective way to affect student performance is to provide accurate, specific and timely feedback to students. Students benefit by knowing what they are graded on and how they will be graded. Schools that ground their grading practices in the research:

1. Reduce grade inflation,
2. Graduate students who are more successful in postsecondary endeavors,
3. Show solid gains in student proficiency in content area work, and
4. Reduce the failure rate.

WHY IMPROVE OUR GRADING PRACTICES NOW?

In a time of increased accountability and with the implementation of Nationwide common proficiency standards, our grades, now more than ever, must represent a clear and accurate summary of a student's current academic achievement. Many of Wisconsin's students who score poorly on college entrance exams have inflated high school grade point averages that do not represent their actual grasp of the content. Statewide only 25% of our high school seniors show the level of competency in college exams that predicts the ability to be successful in the core areas of college requirements: English, Math, Science, and Social Sciences. For Lake Mills students, that number is slightly lower at 24%.

WHY DO WE FOCUS ON GRADING AS WE IMPROVE INSTRUCTION?

The advantage to students in our grading for learning system is that they clearly understand how their work compares to the expected proficiency level, and they always have multiple opportunities to show what they know. Lake Mills High School has rightly connected improvement in teaching and learning to grading practices.

EXPECTATIONS AND USE OF THE PRACTICES

In a learning organization, taking risks and trial/error should be encouraged. Innovation occurs when people work together to solve problems and improve practices on multiple fronts. Effective student feedback work is only one of those fronts. Expectations are that professional staff be familiar with the content and practices in this guide. Over the next several years, leaders will discuss and work with staff to use and apply the concepts and practices. This should allow all of us to learn and grow.

EFFECT STUDENT FEEDBACK #1: SCHOOL-WIDE GRADING SCALE

In order for LMHS to offer our students a consistent and reliable grading system, we have adopted a common grading scale that exists across all curricula. By utilizing this consistent measure, "report card grades indicate the same level of understanding in all classrooms" (Guskey, p. 103).

Resources: Practical Solutions for Serious Problems in Standards-based Grading. Guskey, 2009 .

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

The following school wide grading scale has been adopted by LMHS.

A 92 - 100%

A- 90 - 91.99%

B+ 88 - 89.99%

B 82 - 87.99%

B- 80 - 81.99%

C+ 78 - 79.99%

C 72 - 77.99%

C- 70 - 71.99%

D+ 68 - 69.99%

D 62 - 67.99%

D- 60 - 61.99%

F 0 - 59.99%



EFFECT STUDENT FEEDBACK #2: SCHOOL-WIDE GRADING SCALE

"Teachers at all levels must be clear about their grading standards, the various components that will be considered in determining grades, and the criteria that will be used to evaluate those components". (Guskey, p. 33). In order for all stakeholders to understand the characteristics included in a grade, the table below should be used as a reference.

A

- Assessment scores indicate a high level of understanding of concepts and skills.
- Responses on assessments are well organized, show attention to detail, and are of high quality.
- Almost all learning targets are fully or consistently met and extended.

B

- Assessment scores indicate a good grasp of concepts and skills.
- Responses on assessments are generally well organized, show attention to detail, and are of high quality.
- Most of the learning targets are fully or consistently met.

C

- Assessment scores indicate satisfactory acquisition of skills and concepts.
- Responses on assessments vary in their organization, attention to detail and quality.
- More than half of the learning targets are fully or consistently met.

EFFECT STUDENT FEEDBACK #3: FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE GRADING

Summative assessments are the primary source of grades. Formative assessments are for learning and summative assessments are of learning. Formative assessments provide meaningful feedback to the student and the teacher to allow students continued growth of the learning targets. Formative assessments aid the teacher to assess and scaffold instruction. Summative assessments are final products and/or performances to evaluate student achievement of standards. Final grades primarily reflect student achievement of standards on summative assessments.

Resources: O'Connor, K. A Repair Kit For Grading Chapter 5, 2009; Wormeli, R. Fair Isn't Always Equal: Assessing & Grading in the Differentiated Classroom, 2006.

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Evidence for formative assessments can be used to promote success in summative assessments.

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

Formative assessments will be used to provide feedback so that students can prepare for summative assessments.

- Formative assessments are used as a tool for feedback and as an opportunity for students to practice mastering a learning target.
- Formative assessments may include: daily homework assignments, study guides, "drafts" of thesis statements, notebooks, note cards, and other activities.

Summative assessments will be used as the primary source to calculate student grades.

- Summative assessments are used to make a judgment of a student's mastery of a learning target after the use of formative assessments.
- Summative assessments may include: tests, projects, research papers, essays, performances, labs, etc.
- Participation is the avenue to demonstrate the achievement of a standard and not an assessment of the standard.

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

- Clear learning targets are shared with students and integrated into the instruction.
- Assessments measure the level of proficiency related to specific, clear learning targets.
- Communicate to students their level of proficiency.

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

D

- Assessment scores indicate weak acquisition of skills and concepts. Responses on assessments vary widely in their organization, attention to detail and quality.
- Only a few of the learning targets are fully or consistently met.

F

- Assessment scores indicate very weak grasp of concepts and skills
- Responses on assessments show very poor quality in their organization, attention to detail and quality.
- None or almost none of the learning targets is fully or consistently met.

I

- Desired evidence of student achievement is missing.
- At the conclusion of the grading period, all incompletes will be calculated as an F on the 12 point scale. At the end of semester, nonmedical incompletes become permanent.

EFFECT STUDENT FEEDBACK #4: REASSESSMENT OF SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

Final grades need to recognize the student's level of proficiency (pg. 120 O' Connor). Summative assessments are the primary source of grades. Since learning is developmental, all students will be allowed the opportunity to retake a summative assessment to prove a higher level of proficiency. Students who choose to follow the established department criteria for reassessment will earn the most recent score.

Resources: O'Connor, K. A Repair Kit For Grading, pp. 120; Wormeli, R. Fair Isn't Always Equal: Assessing & Grading in the Differentiated Classroom, 2006.

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

- One reassessment opportunity is available per summative assessment. In certain circumstances an additional reassessment opportunity may be provided at the teacher's discretion.
- Prior to the reassessment, students must provide new evidence that learning has occurred by completing satisfactory work as determined by the teacher.
- The reassessment time frame will be consistent within a department or class and communicated to students.
- The most recent score on an assessment will replace the previous score(s).
- Reassessment opportunities are not available for multi-step assessments such as research papers, projects or presentations.
- Reassessment opportunities are not available for semester exams, Advanced Placement (AP) classes, JEDI and/or Dual Credit opportunities.

EFFECT STUDENT FEEDBACK #5: ATTENDANCE

“Don’t consider attendance in grade determination; report absences separately”. (O’Connor p. 47). Student learning is assessed through academic achievement, not the behavior of being absent from class. Unexcused and excused absences are significant concerns in the behavioral and legal arena, but do not impact grading which requires evidence of standards achievement.

Resources: O’Connor, K. A Repair Kit For Grading, pp. 4751.; Wormeli, R. Fair Isn’t Always Equal: Assessing & Grading in the Differentiated Classroom.

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Student attendance may not be used in the calculation of academic scores.

Absences may lead to students having to make up missing activities.

Some classes require consistent demonstration of skills. Absences may affect the teacher’s ability to assess the required skills, which may be reflected in the student’s academic score.

EFFECT STUDENT FEEDBACK #6: EXTRA CREDIT OR BONUS POINTS

The purpose of academic grades is to accumulate evidence to accurately determine each student’s achievement; it is not accumulating points to receive a grade. Additional evidence of understanding can be developed, however, it should be considered alongside previous evidence to determine a student’s mastery of curriculum standards. According to best practice, “Don’t give points for extra credit or use bonus points; seek only evidence that more work has resulted in a higher level of achievement.” (O’Connor, p. 32)

Resources: O’Connor, K. “ A Repair Kit For Grading. 3236; Wormeli, R. Fair Isn’t Always Equal: Assessing & Grading in the Differentiated Classroom.

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Extra Credit 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.

Activities of sufficient and significant rigor that truly extend and demonstrate a student’s understanding of a learning standard can be used in determining a student’s grade. (For example: Through the use of differentiation, a student submits alternative evidence to show the benchmarks have been met. This is not to add “extra” points; it is to replace an already existing assessment.)

EFFECT STUDENT FEEDBACK #7: ASSESSING INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT VS GROUP WORK

If a grade represents a clear and accurate summary of a student’s current academic achievement, group grades do NOT work as they do not reflect individual achievement but rather the achievement of a group of students. In the practice of grading for learning, teachers will ensure that all evidence used to determine grades comes from individual evidence of achievement. Student academic grades should not depend on the achievement of other students. “Group grades are so blatantly unfair that on this basis alone they should never be used.” (Kagan, 1995). While cooperative learning is valuable for student achievement, each student should complete work and be assessed individually.

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Individual grades will not include group scores.

Group scores can be given, but will not be part of an individual’s academic grade.

Use collaborative work as an instructional strategy, not an assessment of skills or knowledge.

EFFECT STUDENT FEEDBACK #8: MISSING WORK, LATE WORK, AND ZEROS

It is necessary to establish, maintain, and hold students accountable for due dates and deadlines. Due dates and deadlines are necessary for students/teachers to adequately and efficiently manage the workload. Therefore, if a student sees in advance that the due date is not going to be attainable, he/she needs to communicate this information to the teacher.

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

Late work will be accepted up to the unit assessment is given or the completion of the unit. Homework and assignments not turned in before the end of a grading period will remain a zero and be appropriately calculated into the student's final grade. This does not apply to dual credit, off campus/online courses, and AP Courses.

Resources : Guskey, T. Zero Alternatives. Principal Leadership, 49-53, 2004; O'Connor, K. How to Grade for Learning. Glenview, IL. Pearson Education, 2002; Marzano, R. Transforming Classroom Grading. Alexandria, VA.: Association for Curriculum and Development, 2000

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

- Set reasonable timelines
- Find out why students are not meeting deadlines, help them
- Communicate all learning targets

PRACTICES THAT INHIBIT LEARNING

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

