

## **Secondary Grading Guidelines**

In order to provide clarity and consistency to the grading process for all stakeholders, the following guidelines have been developed by the Grading Consult, via the GGUSD/GGEA consult process, to be implemented in the 2010-2011 school year.

### **GUIDELINES FOR FINAL SEMESTER/QUARTER GRADES**

Academic grades should reflect a student's mastery of district approved, state or national content standards. Standards-based formative and summative assessments determine a student's level of mastery. The levels of performance, below, taken from the California State Standards, are presented with a short descriptor and the corresponding grade (A-F):

- A- Advanced:** student demonstrates an in-depth understanding of the standards and is able to broadly apply the knowledge and skills of standards across a variety of contexts.
- B- Proficient:** student demonstrates a complete understanding of the standards and has some ability to apply the knowledge and skills of standards.
- C- Basic:** student demonstrates a functional understanding of the knowledge and skills of the standards.
- D- Below Basic:** student demonstrates limited understanding of the knowledge and skills of the standards.
- F- Far Below Basic:** student demonstrates a lack of understanding of the knowledge and skills of the standards

*NOTE: The descriptors shown above (advanced, proficient, etc.) reflect the levels of mastery from the California State Standards, and are **NOT** meant to equate with CST or GGUSD benchmark cut points or corresponding percentages.*

### **GENERAL GRADING BREAKDOWN**

The following are general guidelines for determining total course grades:

- 10% OR LESS**      HOMEWORK (PRACTICE)
  
- 40% OR LESS**      FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS (PROGRESS MONITORING)  
Examples include: class work, notes/notebook, independent or group work, presentations, quizzes
  
- 60% OR MORE**      SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS (ASSESSMENT OF MASTERY)  
Examples include: projects, final essays, presentations, tests and labs

Please note that the GGUSD Administrative Regulation 6125.2(b) states that *Work Habits/Citizenship Marks for "citizenship" relate to a student's conduct in the class or course of instruction. Marks for "work habits" relate to attendance, completion of assignments, and use of class study time. Marks for "grades" shall not be impacted by a student's performance in other categories, such as "citizenship" or "work habits".*

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### ASSESSMENTS

An assessment does not necessarily mean a written test, but can include both formative and summative opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery of class standards.

Quality assessments are designed with three purposes:

1. Reporting to stakeholders: parents, colleges, community
2. Student awareness of progress and areas needed for improvement
3. Teacher modification of instruction and identification of additional strategies to assist struggling students meet the learning goals

Formative assessments have the purpose of monitoring and guiding student learning as it is still in progress, whereas summative assessments refer to the evaluation of whether or not the student has mastered the learning goals.

<b>Comparison of Formative and Summative Assessments</b>		
	<b>Formative</b>	<b>Summative</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	To monitor and guide a process/product while it is still in progress	To judge the success of a process/product at the end
<b>Time of Assessment</b>	During the process or development of the product	At the end of the process or when the product is complete
<b>Types of assessment techniques</b>	Informal observations, checks for understanding, graded homework, corrected class work, quizzes, rough draft essays or other written work, teacher's questions, and worksheets	Formal observation, projects, term papers, exhibitions, essays, lab reports, performances, multi-media presentations, oral presentations, and tests
<b>Weighting</b>	<b>40% or less</b>	<b>60% or more</b>
<i>Adapted from How to Grade for Learning by Ken O'Conner</i>		

#### **Components of a Quality Assessment**

1. Quality assessments must be standards-based, meet the level of rigor identified in the standard, and uses language that is straight-forward and does not hinder the student from understanding what is being asked.
2. A quality subjective assessment will include a rubric or detailed scoring guide (presented to students before task or assignment is given) that allows the student to clearly understand the objectives of the tasks.
3. Quality assessments are designed to ensure that accommodations and modifications specified on individual students' IEPs (or 504 plans) are appropriately applied.
4. Quality assessments for English Language Learners are designed to assess mastery of the content standards rather than their level of English language acquisition.
5. Quality assessment of students will include multiple measures that allow a variety of opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery of the learning goals. Multiple measures include a combination of formative and summative assignments and assessments over time.

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### HOMEWORK

Homework consists of standards-based tasks that are independently completed by students outside of the classroom. Homework is an opportunity for students to process, preview/review, practice or complete skills or standards previously taught. Homework should be relevant and engaging, challenging students to extend their thinking and should assist students in building and refining study skills.

<b>Comparison of Two Types of Homework: Practice vs. Formative Assessment/Project</b>		
<b>Type</b>	<b>Practice</b>	<b>Formative Assessment/Project</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	Preview/review, practice of skills. The tasks should neither be too easy (busy work) nor too challenging (frustration-level).	See formative/summative assessment chart on previous page
<b>How it is assessed?</b>	Daily homework for practice should be checked and students should be acknowledged for completion but not penalized during the practice stage (for example: practice vs. games in sports).	Some work (essays, projects or other assignments) might be done outside of class but become a formative (or summative assessment), and eventually be graded for mastery.
<b>Weighting</b>	10% or less	Included in 40% formative assessments

Practice homework should count for no more than 10% (1 letter grade) of the entire academic grade, as it:

- may not reflect student’s actual mastery level.
- may or may not have been completed independently.
- may be weighted in the total grade as it provides an incentive/motivation for mastery.
- may cause a student to improve or drop one letter grade but will not inordinately inflate or skew the extent to which the grade reflects student mastery, for example: a student below standard should not be receiving an A solely based on homework, while a student who demonstrates mastery should not fail a class solely based on homework.

#### **Time Allotted for Homework**

Students typically have homework 3-5 times per week in core four classes, possibly fewer in electives. Our District Administrative Regulations (6125.5 I & J) provide the following guidelines:

***Intermediate School** When homework is assigned to students in intermediate schools, it should average one hour per week per class in which they enrolled, but should not exceed one and one-half hours per week per class.*

***High School** When homework is assigned to students in high school, it should average two hours per week in each class in which they are enrolled, but should not exceed three hours per week per class.*

#### **Specific Weighting of Grade Components by Department**

The consult recommends that staff uses the general guidelines, above, to establish more specific and consistent guidelines at minimum, by course, and whenever possible, by department at each individual school site. For example, student grades in all Biology classrooms at a particular campus should be calculated using a common formula. Tests, quizzes, benchmark/final exams, lab reports, homework, and/or other categories should be weighted the same in calculating student’s overall grades from teacher to teacher. In creating more explicit common grading guidelines, please consider the following:

1. An appropriate relationship between formative and summative assessments must be established.
2. Student mastery demonstrated through summative assessment will outweigh formative assessments in determining the academic grade.
3. Both formative and summative assessments will include multiple measures to address:
  - a) diverse learning styles
  - b) the needs of significant subgroups such as Special Education and EL Learners, etc.

## **GRADING CONSULT ADDENDUMS**

### **GRADING FAQs**

**Q: How did the grading consult begin?**

A: The grading consult began as a response to concerns and questions that teachers have had regarding grading in GGUSD, and as a means to allow teachers representing all schools to participate in decision-making regarding grading, rather than have it imposed from the outside by the federal, state or local government.

**Q: How is the grading consult conducted?**

A: The grading consult met for 4 full days and in subcommittee for several meetings throughout the 2009-2010 school year, during which time they developed this new grading guidelines (and addendum) document. The consult is comprised of representatives from all secondary schools (two from each intermediate and three to four from each high school) and, as with all GGEA/GGUSD consults, works to develop consensus and arrive at decisions using a collaborative process.

**Q: When and how will the new guidelines be implemented?**

A: The new guidelines will be implemented in the 2010-2011 school year. All teachers will receive a copy of the new guidelines in June of 2010 and all sites will continue their discussions of these new grading guidelines in the 2010-2011 school year.

**Q: Will there be training and support for the new guidelines?**

A: Yes! The Thursday of SuperWeek in summer of 2010 will feature acclaimed author, Robert Marzano, for a half-day workshop reviewing standards-based grading. All teachers are strongly encouraged to attend that workshop at Don Wash Auditorium, along with the corresponding breakout session in which teachers will meet by content areas and discuss the grading guidelines, as well as provide input into content specific guidelines for the future. Please see your SuperWeek brochure for more information on registration.

**Q: Will the consult continue to meet in the future?**

A: Yes, the consult will continue to meet in the future to examine grading issues and district assessments, as well as identify potential grading pilots using best practices and collect and analyze grading data.

### **SUGGESTED BEST PRACTICES**

The following *suggested* best practices in grading are being provided to support teachers in utilizing standards-based grading to ensure that grades truly reflect what students know and are able to do in relation to established content standards.

#### **Mastery of Standards Over Time**

Mastery is a level of performance that shows that a student has demonstrated the knowledge, skills, and abilities for a unit of instruction or subject area as defined by a recognized standard. Determining mastery is an instructional process that provides students with multiple opportunities to demonstrate content mastery

Providing students with an opportunity to demonstrate mastery over time supports learning by:

- Acknowledging that learning is an ongoing process
- Understanding that what matters is how much learning occurs, not when it occurs
- Honoring individual differences by recognizing that students learn at different rates

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- Realizing that students do not always perform at their real level, on their first attempt, in a set time, or on one method of assessment
- Understanding that one type of assessment does not fit all

Suggestions for implementation:

- Students will be given opportunities to demonstrate mastery of the standards over time only if students show correctives prior to receiving opportunities.
  - a. Students will show correctives prior to receiving opportunities for mastery of standards during the current grading period.
    - i. Examples for implementation at teacher's discretion
      1. Re-teaching at teacher's discretion
      2. Extended day opportunities as needed such as tutoring
      3. Error analysis on missed questions before reassessment
      4. Independent correctives can include flashcards, summary notes, essays, study guides, practice graphic organizers etc...
      5. Tutorials
      6. Test corrections
      7. Error analysis
    - b. Students will be given multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery of the standards during the current grading period.
      - i. Examples for implementation at content/department's discretion
        1. Re-test specific areas (focus standards or essential questions)
        2. Alternative assessments such as essays, standards-based projects, portfolios, oral/verbal assessments
        3. Content/Department alternative common assessments
        4. Multiple versions of the same assessment

### **The Impact of Zero**

Currently, teachers report giving students a score of zero in a wide variety of circumstances. For example, students in our district might earn a zero for:

- being absent
- not turning in an assignment
- not completing an assignment or exam
- turning in an assignment late
- doing an assignment incorrectly
- incorrectly answering all questions on an assignment or exam

Because most teachers calculate grades using a computer grading program, like Aeries, the impact of a zero is significant due to the averaging of scores. Consider the following scenario, a student who earns 100% on one exam, then misses the next and earns a "0" because of the absence, would average 50% and fail according to a standard grading scale. Likewise, a student who scores a "0" on a quiz, then masters the material for a later exam on the same standard, could potentially end up with a grade that does not truly reflect her/his knowledge.

Therefore, teachers should consider the following before assigning a score of "0":

- the reason the "0" was given

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- whether the student was given adequate time and opportunity to make-up the “0” (in the case of a missing assignment or test)
- whether the “0” was given on an assignment that was graded for mastery or for “practice”
- whether the student later demonstrated mastery of the standard measured by the previous assignment in which they received the “0”
- what other evidence exists to show student mastery of the standard
- what effect will the “0” have in terms of the student’s motivation and continued efforts to learn the material

The consult agrees that final grades should be a true reflection of what the students knows (i.e. student mastery of the content standards). Teachers should make every effort to ensure that a score of “0” does not skew the overall grade to the point where it no longer accurately represents the student’s mastery of the content area.

### **Alternatives to the Mean**

Most teachers report using a mean, or average, to calculate student grades. The district-adopted Aeries student information system also uses an average or weighted averages to generate grades in the included gradebook. However, this method of calculation does not always provide an accurate reflection of a student’s knowledge. Take, for example, a student who received a poor grade on a quiz, but later performed well on a test over the same material, thus demonstrating mastery of the assessed standard. That student would earn a lower grade than one who did well on both the quiz and the exam, even if both students mastered the same concepts by the end of the unit.

Teachers **may** want to consider the following ways of addressing this issue:

- If a student misses a test or assignment, but shows mastery of the assessed standard on a later date, the student may be exempted (in Aeries, a “NA” is entered) from that particular assignment
- Summative assessments may be weighted more than formative assessments
- Assignments and exams may be weighted more toward the end of a unit, quarter, or semester (this would particularly be appropriate in classes where prior knowledge is built upon as the class progresses)
- Replacing the “0” with a score earned on a later assessment, such as a unit test, final exam or benchmark (e.g. a student scoring 80% on a test, may replace a “0” score on a previous quiz with the 80%)
- Consider a floor grade or min. score in place of “0” for assessments
- Investigate using alternative grading scales for assignments/assessments

### **Student Involvement in Grading**

The consult suggests the following to ensure that students are actively involved in their own educational endeavors:

- flexibility for a Report Card Night or Parent Conferences in lieu of Back to School and/or Open House nights.
- posting all course syllabi and grading policies on school website.
- student-led conferences using a collection of student work and data.
- advisement days or transition programs
- teachers want to see examples of student involvement in the classroom: peer editing, self evaluation, rubrics, rubric development.