



KALISPELL MIDDLE SCHOOL

Grading and Reporting

TOP 13 QUESTIONS

1. Why Standards Based Learning and Grading?

- To accurately communicate achievement and academic growth to students, parents and others.
 - To provide feedback for students to use for self-evaluation and improved achievement.
 - To provide feedback for teachers to use to improve instruction and student achievement.
 - To provide feedback for departments, grade levels, schools and the district to use to make adjustments in curriculum, alignment, materials and assessment.
 - Our goal is to have each student's academic grades reflect what she/he knows based on Common Core, State and/or National academic standards. The primary purpose is to communicate with students what they need to know and how they perform on those skills.

2. What general conclusions can we draw from the research?

- Key points of research into grading practices and reporting include:
 - Grading and reporting are not essential to the instructional process, but the quality of the feedback is an essential part of the learning process.
 - Grading and reporting has some value as a reward, but no value as a punishment.
 - Grading and reporting should always be done in reference to learning criteria (standards).

3. What are the key components of Kalispell Middle School's policy?

- The new grading and reporting policy and procedures system will—
 - Reflect academic achievement based upon adopted learning standards.
 - Contain meaningful feedback.
 - Be honest, fair, transparent, credible, useful and user friendly.
 - Align with our curriculum.
 - Reflect consistency within and among courses, grade levels, departments, and/or schools.

4. What should be included in the grade?

- The primary purpose of grading is to report the academic achievement of students.
- Only assessments that measure what a student knows and can do shall be included in calculating the scores. Please remember, assessments include more than just tests; assessments could also include end of unit projects, multi-media, papers, and oral assessments.

5. What about non-academic factors?

- Course scores will reflect the level of the student's academic achievement. While non-academic factors may be highly valued and often contribute to the student's achievement, they should be communicated separately from an achievement score. This will be displayed as a "work ethic" score.
- The following are examples on non-academic factors
 - Behavior (Attendance, Attitude, Punctuality, Effort)
 - Certain class participation (i.e. the number of times a hand is raised during a period does not demonstrate knowledge).
 - Homework based solely on completion (i.e. there must be some assessment of the work)
 - Other evidence of student characteristics or habits

6. How are grades going to be more consistent?

- Grading expectations will be the same for each specific course—regardless of the teacher. The process for handling late work, types of assessments, breakdown of the scores including end of term grades will be the same within each team.
- Based upon national and state standards developed for each course.
- Grading expectations will be based upon grading rubrics developed at each grade level.

7. What are the primary components used to calculate a score?

- There are two main types of assessments that form the trimester/quarter scores: **formative assessments** and **summative assessments**. The primary source for a term score is based on summative assessments. The secondary source for term scores will come from formative assessments.
- **Summative Assessments**, are given after completing a sequence of instruction and practice and students are ready to be responsible for the material. This provides information used to make judgments about a student's achievement/score. Sample achievement assessments include: final drafts, tests, exams, assignments, projects, and performances.
- **Formative assessments**, are given while a student is learning the material. This is designed to provide direction for both students and teachers.
 - These formative assessments maybe included in a trimester score but, we don't want to have these assessments given while students are in the practice phase of learning to have too heavy an impact on the grade.
 - Feedback for students from this kind of assessment will show students what adjustments are still needed to master the material such as further review and/or additional practice. Or it may confirm that the student is ready to move forward.
 - For teachers, it may provide feedback indicating a need to change instructional strategies or to provide additional practice. Or, it may signal that you are ready to move forward.
 - Formative assessments include activities such as teacher observations, quizzes, homework, rough drafts, peer editing, and notebook checks.

8. What does this mean for homework demands?

- Homework is designed to practice skills/concepts taught in class.
- Homework provides essential feedback, students are empowered to take responsibility for their own learning and improvement.

- Homework is a form of formative assessment is often times referred to as practice, just as homework has been in the past. These types of assessments are used regularly. Dr. Douglas Reeves, an internationally recognized expert in the field suggests,
 - *“Formative assessment is another important way to provide short-term wins throughout the year. Formative assessment provides meaningful feedback that students and teachers can use to improve professional practices and student achievement. Formative assessment need not be long or formal. Consider what happens in music classes every day when a student plays a note incorrectly, the music teacher does not record the error in the grade book and inform the student's parents nine weeks later that the student really needs to work on E-sharp. Music teachers continually assess student performance, stop when necessary to give specific feedback, and then immediately use that feedback to improve student's work.”*

9. Will my student’s scores increase or decrease with this new policy?

- This policy was not created in order to increase or decrease scores. When you receive your student’s score you will know it accurately reflects what she/he knows and can do.

10. How will late work be handled?

- Submitting late work is an issue of punctuality. While it is essential, it will be communicated as part of their Work Ethic score.
- Teachers will establish clear due dates and deadline dates that provide students adequate opportunity to complete assigned work. Please refer to the grading syllabus for further details.
- If work is important enough to be assigned, it important enough to be completed.

11. How does this system prepare students for high school and college?

- Preparation for high school and college is built upon knowledge, skills and work habits. The grading system clearly communicates to students and parents what knowledge, skills and work habits are firmly in place.
- Performance in middle school is one critical predictor of success in high school and college. Students who meet standards and demonstrate effective work habits will likely succeed in high school.
- Additionally, high school reform efforts are focused on increasing the rigor of academic expectations college bound students have in high school.
- Through a greater focus on the achievement of the standards at the middle school level, students will be better prepared for the demands of high school.

12. If my child does everything that is expected of him/her, then why does that only earn a '3'?

- The grading system allows for students to go beyond what is typically expected as defined by the standards. Students learn at varying rates, paces and levels of complexity.
- In our grading system, doing what is expected (i.e. a '3') signifies that a student has met the standard, is proficient and meets expectations on grade level standards. A 4 signifies Advanced, the student exceeds expectations on grade level standards.

13. I don't understand "most recent evidence," most comprehensive evidence," or "most important learning goals. "Why aren't grades just "averaged?"

- Because the purpose of standards-based grading is to report what students know and are able to do, averaging does not necessarily present an accurate picture of where a student is in his learning. A student who struggles in a class at the beginning of a grading period and receives poor grades, but who keeps working and by the end of the grading period can clearly demonstrate competence in the subject, should receive a grade that reflects that competence.

- Consider two students, Stewart and Maria. Stewart comes to school fresh from summer camp and complacently strolls through the semester with these weekly scores: 85, 85, 85, 85, 85, 85, 85, 85, and 85. The average is not difficult to calculate, and Stewart happily settles for his "gentleman's B". Maria struggles for everything she has learned and turns in this performance: 50, 60, 65, 70, 80, 85, 90, 90, and 90. Maria's average (mean) of a little over 75 will, depending on the grading scale, allow her to take home a C or D on her report card if the teacher is devoted to the average, even though any fair observer would note that she is a better mathematician and a more responsive learner than Stewart.