ASSESSMENT AND GRADING PLAN

AUGUST 2020

PROPOSAL
2020-2021

BELLEVUE · SCHOOL DISTRICT

This proposal provides a plan for assessment and grading practices that will result in an equitable system of assessment and grading. However, the impact of long-term remote learning on grading will need to be reviewed.

Recent local and global events continue to highlight deep societal inequities along racial and economic lines. This has been abundantly evident in school districts and schools across the country. In the Bellevue School District, our School Board adopted an Equity and Accountability Policy (Policy 0130) in spring 2019 that charges the district to "Provide concerted universal instructional efforts and extensive and varied intervention opportunities to support all students, including those who face barriers and inequities, to meet key milestones for student growth and achievement."

On June 12, 2020, OSPI released its Reopening Washington Schools 2020: District Planning Guide. This comprehensive document provides guidance and requirements for school districts for re-opening in the fall. School districts are required to adopt reopening plans through local board resolution. Those plans need to be on file with OSPI and the State Board of Education within two weeks of a district's fall starting date. Each district must incorporate certain planning requirements including grading. State Superintendent Chris Reykdal offered this challenge regarding grading: "The pandemic is a call to action for our education system to reassess our grading practices. Now is the time for school leaders and educators to make grades meaningfully aligned to fewer specific standards, combined with feedback that gives students multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning and put homework and extra credit in its proper place. Now is the time to decouple behavior and compliance activities from assessing student learning."

In April 2020, OSPI enacted temporary emergency rules (Chapter 392-901 WAC) that required school districts to continue grading students during the school facility closure. Districts were able to select the grading system that best fit their context, with some requirements, including a prohibition on issuing "F" grades. This emergency rule will expire prior to the 2020–21 school year and it will not be extended.

The OSPI District Planning Guide referenced above states, "Districts should consider the effectiveness of the grading policies at various grade levels implemented for spring of 2020. This information should inform local decisions about grading policies moving forward. The

PLANNING FOR FALL STEERING COMMITTEE

The BSD established a Planning for Fall Steering Committee to oversee the development of the district's re-opening plan and created multiple implementation teams to develop proposals that address the various aspects required by the OSPI, including grading. Under the Curriculum and Instruction Implementation Team, a Grading Team was developed to "determine 2020-21 grading policies." Team members include:

- Michelle Odom - Teacher, Stevenson
- Thea Clarkson - Resource Room Teacher, Highland
- Clinton Stellfox – Teacher, Big Picture
- Carlye O'Neill – ELL facilitator, Sammamish
- Hava Rosenberg, Teacher, Bellevue High
- Zack Daniels, Instructional Mentor
- Suzanne Reeve, ITCL, Odle and Sammamish
- Betty Nhan, Assistant Principal, Tyee
- Vic Anderson, Principal, Bellevue High
- Scott Powers, Director of Teaching and Learning
- John Harrison, Executive Director of Schools

process and decisions about both standards and grading have profound consequences on students, potentially deepening the opportunity gap and existing inequities. Districts should examine how their decisions about grading policies will affect each student group and create an equitable system of instruction, assessment, and grading. Districts have an opportunity now to reframe their systems around culturally responsive and anti-racist practices."

Grading has long been an area of independence and autonomy for teachers. The assessment and grading practices included in this proposal are not intended to replace the critical role of teacher professional judgment in evaluating student progress and communicating information about student learning. However, the experiences of the team as educators and the literature cited above indicate that the sheer number of different grading practices and the inconsistent experiences of students contribute to grades that may not be an accurate reflection of student learning, may reflect biases and are not motivational for students.

The BSD has informed its community that it will re-open in a Remote Learning environment with a plan to move to a Hybrid Learning model when infection rates are significantly lower and a desire to return to In-Person instruction as soon as possible. Families were also provided with an option to participate in a 100% remote environment by enrolling in the BSD Virtual Learning Model and if they choose this model, they will remain there for the first semester. This proposal is intended to apply regardless of the re-opening model. The team is confident that the proposal provides a plan for assessment and grading practices that will result in an equitable system of assessment and grading. Although the team has confidence in the proposal, it is cognizant of the fact that if the district is not able to move to a hybrid-model within six weeks, the impact of long-term remote learning on grading will need to be reviewed and the proposal includes a recommendation to address this. This proposal, once adopted will inform revisions to Procedure 2420P – Exhibit A and potentially the procedure (2420P) and Policy 2420 (Grading and Progress Reports).

> The assessment and grading practices included in this proposal are not intended to replace the critical role of teacher professional judgment in evaluating student progress and communicating information about student learning.

RESEARCH AND EXPERIENCE

With the guidance provided by OSPI and our Equity and Accountability Policy and State Superintendent Reykdal's challenge in mind, the proposal that follows is based on research and prior BEA/BSD work, including:

- BEA/BSD Study Team-work which resulted in a document titled Best Practices for Grading, Reporting, and Assessment codified in Procedure 2420P – Exhibit A

- BEA-BSD Team that developed Grading Guidance PowerPoints in May 2020

- Multiple books and articles on assessment and grading practices, including but not limited to:

  - Carifio, J., Carey, T. (2013). The arguments and data in favor of minimum grading. Mid-Western Educational Researcher, 25(4).

  - Feldman, J. (2018). Grading for Equity: What it Is, Why it Matters, and How It Can Transform Schools and Classrooms. Corwin Press

  - Guskey, T. (2014), On Your Mark: Challenging the Conventions of Grading and Reporting. Solution Tree Press

  - O'Connor, K. (2011). A Repair Kit for Grading K-12: 15 Fixes for Broken Grades. Assessment Training Institution (2nd Edition)

  - Wormeli, R. (2011). Redos and Retakes Done Right. Educational Leadership, 69(3), 22-26.

  - Wormeli, R. (2018). Fair Isn't Always Equal: Assessment and Grading in a Differentiated Classroom. Stenhouse Publishers (2nd Edition)

BELIEFS

What follows are beliefs the Grading Team recommends as unifying beliefs about assessment and grading. The beliefs are aspirational; they represent ideals, recognizing that teachers and schools may be in different stages of progress towards putting them into practice.

GRADES ARE MATHEMATICALLY ACCURATE AND VALID REPRESENTATIONS OF STUDENT LEARNING THAT ARE:

Resistant to teachers' implicit or explicit bias

Motivational for students (i.e., fostering a growth mindset, providing opportunities for redemption, and clearly understandable;

Consistent for students within a course (secondary) or grade level (elementary; i.e., two students enrolled in the same course or grade at the same school, achieving the same level of content/skill, should receive the same grade regardless of the teacher)

ASSESSMENT ITEMS AND GRADING SYSTEMS ARE:

Culturally relevant and anti-racist

Developmentally appropriate (i.e., what is appropriate for kindergarten students may not be appropriate for 4th grade, 7th grade, etc.)

Reflective of student interests, goals, and lived experiences

TEACHERS, CASE MANAGERS, AND OTHER STAFF MEMBERS COMMUNICATE CLEARLY, REGULARLY, AND IN A POSITIVE MANNER WITH STUDENTS AND FAMILIES ABOUT STUDENT PROGRESS.

Communication in the student/family's chosen form of communication and language.

Communication not limited to formal progress reporting (term grades).

STUDENTS HAVE REGULAR OPPORTUNITIES TO REFLECT ON PEER AND/OR TEACHER FEEDBACK IN COMPARISON TO RUBRICS/ STANDARDS/ TARGETS.

Rubrics with clear descriptions of each scoring category help students to meet learning standards and understand their progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations that follow are assessment and grading practices that the Grading Team considers a set of unifying practices that are aspirational.

The recommendations that follow are assessment and grading practices that the Grading Team considers a set of unifying practices that are aspirational in the sense that if these practices are implemented with fidelity of intent; grades will be ultimately be mathematically accurate, resistant to bias and motivational for students. It also acknowledged that teachers and schools are in different stages of readiness considering the reality of beginning the year in a 100% remote learning model. The intent of this proposal is to provide set of classroom assessment practices for immediate implementation and grading practices for phased implementation that provide a roadmap for a district-wide system of grading that provides a consistency of student experience toward more equitable academic and social emotional student outcomes.

SCOPE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Assessment and Grading for Multi-language Learners and Students with Individual Education Plans and Section 504 Plans
- Classroom Assessment Practices
- Grading Practices (Phased Implementation)
- Implementation Support

DEFINITIONS

Assessment: Assessment of student learning refers to the variety of methods or approaches, both formative and summative (see Appendix), that educators develop and use to assess, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, skill acquisition, and educational needs of students.

For the purpose of this proposal, this definition applies to classroom level assessment and does not apply to commercially developed universal screeners or diagnostic assessments, district interim assessments, or state assessments.

Grading: Grading is the system of evaluating and reporting student progress and achievement relative to learning standards using skills based evidence. Grades allow educators and schools to provide progress information to students, families and others. The purpose of grades is to reflect the totality of what students know, understand and can do. Student progress (grades) is formally shared quarterly at the secondary level (6-12) and at the end of each semester at elementary (K-5) schools.

Assessment and Grading for Multi-language Learners and Students with Individual Education Plans and Section 504 Plans

Grades for students receiving multi-lingual learner (MLL) services account for current language proficiency.
- Resources such as the Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs) and English Language Performance Standards (ELPS) can help in this process.
- MLL students should have opportunities to be assessed in multiple ways (in their first language, using visual representations, etc.)

Grades for students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) reflect performance/expectations that reflect IEP goals
- Assessments are delivered with accommodations and/or modifications highlighted in IEP and 504 plans
- Grades for students with IEPs and 504s reflect performance when these accommodations and/or modifications are provided
- Determination of proficiency and progress will acknowledge and take into consideration service areas and individual goals

For example, a student with a service area of writing and goal area of sentence production may not meet proficiency on a writing assessment on district-developed rubric, but may make progress to show the development of new skills in comparison to IEP goal

Classroom Assessment Practices

1

Classroom assessment is aligned to standards

Standards assessed for grading represent the core content and skills of the course as defined by the course standards/targets in the district curriculum

Rationale: Content-area and grade-level standards represent the skills we want our students to acquire. Our assessments can take the form of tests, quizzes, in-class assignments, discussions, debates and one-on-one conversations with students, among other methods. These varied assessment opportunities align to content-area standards.

"Distinguishing specific product criteria and reporting an achievement grade based on these criteria allows teachers to offer a better and more precise description of students' academic achievement and performance" *(T. Guskey, On Your Mark).*

Students are provided with multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning

Skills and knowledge are assessed with multiple opportunities and in varied formats such as: test, oral discussion, performance, and projects etc.

Rationale: Learning is a process that includes setbacks and incremental progress on the way to a goal. The process should include a system that includes a whole-class assessment as well as assessments tailored to the specific needs of individual students. For example, if a student is more likely to meet a standard with a verbal product, they should have this option when available.

"If ... your purpose as an educator is to develop talent, then you go about your work differently. First, you clarify what you want students to learn and be able to do. Then you do everything possible to ensure that all students learn those things well" *(T. Guskey, On Your Mark).*

2

Students can re-take and/or re-do summative assessments

- Re-takes/re-do's may consist of different items covering the same content standards.
- Teachers may set a deadline after which retakes/re-do for specific assessments are no longer available (for example, end of quarter). Teachers may also require additional practice or demonstration of learning prior to the re-take opportunity.
- Recognizing the time restrictions on grading procedures, semester final summative assessments could be exempt from this process.

3

Rationale: Students are on a learning journey and should be able to trust that learning is acknowledged throughout the process and not disproportionately evaluated for early errors. A student should be able to meet and exceed a standard at any point in a grading period (or in a future grading period at the discretion of the teacher). Regardless of when the standard was met, learning should be recognized with the elimination of recorded errors on the same standard. Grades will be more accurate, and the school experience will be more motivational when students know they have more chances to grow and prepare anew for an assessment. Assessments will be more bias-resistant as they will no longer advantage students with the greatest educational preparation.

"Maturation occurs in the fully credited recovery from unsuccessful attempts, not by labeling those attempts as failures," *(R. Wormeli, Redos and Retakes Done Right)*

Classroom Assessment Practices

3 EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENT RE-TAKE OR RE-DO SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

- The original assessment (i.e. same test or project)
- A new version of the original assessment covering the same content
- A verbal conversation with student
- Student shows evidence of learning (i.e. subsequent assessments on the same standard).

Late work used to assess student learning is fully recognized to demonstrate proficiency

- Teachers may set a deadline beyond which a group of assessed products will not be accepted (the date of the unit assessment, one week before the end of the term, etc.).
- Teachers may establish expectations of prior communication between student and teacher for late projects, quizzes, test, essays etc. (assessments used for grading purposes).
- All students are provided with adequate time to demonstrate their current level of proficiency.
- Since learning is a process, grades should more heavily weight students' most recent performances. (i.e., if a student does not initially demonstrate mastery of a skill/standard, but demonstrates mastery/growth in later assessments, the grade should more heavily weight the trend towards mastery)

Rationale: Late work should be accepted and recognized fully for the skill-based evidence it displays because we need to focus not on when a student learns a skill, but if they learn that skill. Grades will be a more accurate representation of what a student has achieved, and the learning process will be more motivational when students realize they are part of a process that emphasizes learning as opposed to expediency.

"Reducing grades for late work both creates inaccuracy and violates our bias-resistant Driving Principle...a student who has demonstrated A quality work but who submitted the work past the due date has her grade lowered to a B, which is an inaccurate representation of her level of performance," (J. Feldman, Grading for Equity).

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CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

1 Classroom assessment is aligned to standards

2 Students are provided with multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning

3 Students can re-take and/or re-do summative assessments

4 Late work used to assess student learning is fully recognized to demonstrate proficiency

Grading Practices (Phased Implementation)

The two grading practices below, constitute a significant transformation of practice for many teachers and especially in a 100% remote learning environment. The two practices below are complex and nuanced and need to be developed further and refined before they are implemented. It is also important that teachers are supported with professional learning and that families and students have opportunity to provide feedback and participate in this process in order to support change of this magnitude and build ownership and investment in the 2020-21 Annual Plan goal to move toward a system where grades are a more meaningful measure of student progress. We will work with teachers, students, families, counselors, and administrators to collectively explore grading practices with a lens of effectiveness and equity, and develop a phased plan for updating grading practices over the next 2-3 years.

It is recognized that some teachers and schools are already employing the two grading practices below and it is hoped that teachers will strongly consider exploring the use of these practices when school begins September. Utilizing these equitable grading practices will result in grades that are more mathematically accurate, resistant to bias and motivational to students, especially in a 100% remote learning environment. For example, establishing a minimum grade floor (i.e. 50%) and not using factors that don't demonstrate proficiency in grade calculation, are practices that mitigate the challenges of remote learning and consistent with the "do no harm" guidance that both OSPI and the BSD provided in grading direction last spring. "Do no harm" should continue be our mantra moving forward and utilizing these practices is also consistent with OSPI's commitment to "support students furthest away from educational justice."

Therefore, it is recommended that a team be formed to further develop the two grading practices that follow during the first semester of the 2020-21 school year, with implementation on a pilot/voluntary basis beginning second semester (see Implementation Support section below). It is anticipated that expanded implementation would occur during the 2021-22 school year and beyond.

1 GRADES ARE BASED ON PROFICIENCY OR PROGRESS TOWARD STANDARDS.

- Behavior, attendance, participation, effort, extra-credit, bonus points, homework and any other factor that doesn't indicate proficiency on standards are not used in grade calculation. Therefore, a student's final grade is based on skill-based evidence.

- Skill-based evidence can come from quizzes, in-class comments or presentations, tests, performance on class activities, one-on-one conferences with teacher, etc.

- Scores on homework or other factors may appear in the gradebook but are not weighted.

- Final (term) grades reflect the student's level of skill and/or growth on a standard by the end of the term and not simply an average of points earned.

Rationale: Skill-based evidence is a student's varied demonstration of learning within a standard. When we fully embrace evidence of learning instead of the accumulation of points, this skill-based evidence becomes the only valid contribution to a student's grade. Extra credit and bonus points invite teacher bias and student privilege into the grading equation. Homework cannot be completed equitably when we can't control for similar conditions in a student's home life. When one student has access to tutoring after hours and another has work responsibilities, we create educational injustice if student grades are affected by these scenarios. Eliminating homework grades places the onus back on the teacher to maximize learning within the class period for each student, creating more accurate and bias-resistant grading. Grades based on skill-based evidence will be more bias-resistant by eliminating effort and compliance grading that invites teacher bias.

"Reporting achievement separate from behaviors means that everyone can know as accurately as possible what a grade means in achievement terms," (K. O'Connor, A Repair Kit for Grading: 15 Fixes for Broken Grades).

Grading Practices (Phased Implementation)

Rationale: Nearly every test that measures competency outside of the school setting uses something other than the 100-point scale that is typical in schools, particularly in secondary schools. In a typical 100-point scale where anything less than 50% is considered not passing, three times as many gradations are allocated to failure when compared to a 0-4 scale.

When the grading floor is 0%, students need to overcome gaps of 0-59% to climb out of a "F" grade. For example, when only 9% of the scale (50-59%) versus 59% (0-59%) of the grading scale represents "F" grades, students have a much greater chance of recovering from early errors and gaps in understanding throughout a grading period. This increases student and teacher hope in academic recovery and enhances motivation for all parties involved in achieving learning standards.

"Minimum grading actually empowers teachers and schools...as it lessens, dampens out, and neutralizes most of the negative aspects of grades...Minimum grading is a first step and a key component in creating a culture of compassion and caring in a learning organization, classroom or school," (Carifio and Carey, 2013).

At the elementary level grades are currently assigned using a 1-4 scale. The table below is one possible secondary school example:

0-4 Score	Descriptor	Letter Grade	Percentage Score
4	Exceeds Standards	A	90-100%
3	Meets Standards	B	80-89%
2	Approaching Standards	C	70-79%
1	Below Standards	D	60-69%
0	Not Enough Evidence	F	50-59%

Implementation Support

An Implementation Advisory Team will be formed to support the implementation of these practices. The role of the Advisory Team would also include but not be limited to:

- Planning and developing professional learning opportunities for educators
- Developing the 0-4 grading scale with a minimum grade floor and clear descriptors at each level
- Identifying resources that exist and are needed. For example, teachers and schools already using equitable practices, common grading scale etc.
- Identify support for Building Leadership Teams (BLTs), Racial Equity and Inclusion Teams (REITs) and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) focused on Assessment and Grading Practices
- Advising/supporting Instructional Mentor and ITCL support
- Expanding educator voice and including student and family voice (focus groups, forums, book studies
- Reviewing the impact of long-term (longer than 6 weeks) remote learning on grades and developing temporary grading guidance recommendations for quarter and semester grades

GRADES ARE ASSIGNED ON A 0-4 SCALE FOR ALL STUDENTS WITH A MINIMUM GRADE FLOOR

2

APPENDIX

It is important to expand traditional definitions of summative and formative assessments to achieve accurate and bias-resistant grading.

TRADITIONAL VIEW OF **SUMMATIVE** ASSESSMENTS

- Big tests
- Big projects
- Final, one-shot assessments of skill and knowledge

EXPANDED VIEW OF **SUMMATIVE** ASSESSMENTS

Anything that allows a student to show skill-based evidence relative to a standard. This can include:

- Tests
- Projects
- In-class assignments designed as practice in which a student meets or exceeds a standard
- Verbal conversations with a student designed as a formative assessment of progress in which a student meets or exceeds a standard
- Alternative means of displaying proficiency related to a standard that meets a student's skill set although it may not be the traditional test or project that typically used to assess students

An on-going process of a teacher and student attempting to reach proficiency in a standard or using multiple modes of evaluating student learning

TRADITIONAL VIEW OF **FORMATIVE** ASSESSMENTS

- Points-based homework or classwork assignments
- Thumbs-up or down physical response participation
- Quick verbal checks

EXPANDED VIEW OF **FORMATIVE** ASSESSMENTS

- Ungraded checks of student proficiency relative to a standard that could ultimately yield skill-based evidence of the skill and could then be reflected as a graded skill

Formative and Summative Assessment

It is important to expand traditional definitions of summative and formative assessments to achieve accurate and bias-resistant grading. Summative and formative assessments are delivered by the teacher and yield skill-based evidence from the student. When we consider the skill-based evidence students produce after attempting summative and formative assessments, we discover myriad ways for students to display proficiency related to the learning standards.

Narrative Example

Ms. Molina is teaching an argumentative unit in English. She is focusing on pathos-based argumentation and has just shown a video of an impassioned speech geared heavily to pathos-based appeals. Pathos-based appeals will be one standard on which students will be evaluated in their final argumentative speeches given in two weeks. To practice, she asks students to choose a topic on which they have strong emotions. The students break out into Teams calls of three and take turns using sentence frames to make their appeals. For example, they create their own appeals with the frame, "How would you feel if _____…This injustice will lead to _____…" After 5 minutes of practice, she reconvenes the class as an entire group and asks students to share their appeals. Jethro volunteers and delivers a successful pathos-based appeal that breaks free from the sentence frame that was provided. In this case, Ms. Molina can affirm Jethro's proficiency in the pathos-based appeal standard, add a 3 or 4 to the gradebook and try to assess another student or students. Ms. Molina could even ask all students to take Jethro's lead and type a 3-4 sentence pathos-based pledge in a style of their own into a Forms exit ticket or record a verbal 3-4 sentence appeal and post it to a chat or e-mail to the teacher. Although this is a couple weeks before the speech, there is no reason to wait to record student proficiency in standards.