



# **Grading and Reporting Guidelines and Procedures**

**(Effective August 2013)**

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## **Introduction**

Classroom grading and reporting practices typically reflect firmly held beliefs and attitudes of the teaching professionals working in a school system. Most teaching professionals tend to employ grading methods or strategies that were modeled for them during student teaching or early in their career and which fit their instructional style most comfortably. 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 and reporting. In this era of increased accountability and intensive focus on results, a challenge that all school systems face is how best to improve grading practices so that the feedback provided to stakeholders accurately portrays what each student knows, understands, and can do as a result of the learning experiences provided in a given grade or course.

Given HSD's emphasis on the use of the Understanding By Design (UbD) model for framing curriculum, assessment, and instruction in a standards aligned system, the following questions are essential to the topics of grading and reporting:

- What do we expect students to know, understand, and be able to do?
- How will we know whether or not students have learned what was intended?
- What do we do if students already know, understand, and can do what we desire them to learn before the instruction begins?
- What do we do if students have not demonstrated desired learning yet?
- How should we report feedback to stakeholders about what students learned, both with regard to academic standards for achievement and "soft skills" needed for success within and beyond the school setting?

## **Historical Perspective**

Since the district's immersion in the study of best practices related to curriculum/assessment development and differentiated instruction dating back to 2006-2007, topics related to grading and reporting practices have surfaced and become more prevalent as concerns that need attention. During the winter of 2012-13, the district convened a K-12 committee comprised of more than 30 district office personnel, principals, department leaders, and professional staff to:

- Review the district's current grading and reporting policies, guidelines, and procedures
- Examine the research regarding best practices in grading and reporting
- Make recommendations to the district for refining our policies and guidelines regarding grading and reporting practices.

The Grading and Reporting (GnR) Committee met throughout the winter and spring of 2013, reviewing district documents related to current practices and reviewing the literature and thinking of the foremost authorities writing about these topics (Brookhart, Guskey, Marzano, O'Connor, Reeves, Stiggins, Wormeli, etc.) A list of resources reviewed during the committee's work is posted to the GnR wiki at <http://GnR.wiki.hempfieldsd.org>.

By March, the committee had reached a point where they were prepared to engage in a theme analysis exercise intended to help the group prioritize those topics that were in need of the most immediate attention at Hempfield. These topics became the focus for the remainder of the work done through the Spring of 2013 and included:

- Defining what constitutes a “grade”
- Developing greater consistency in assessment, grading, and reporting practices
- Educating stakeholders (staff, students, parents) about changes to be enacted in 2013-14 or beyond.

The committee broke into sub-committees (core principles, common vocabulary, grade composition, work habits) to address these priority areas and establish district guiding principles to which grading and reporting practices will be aligned moving forward. In May, the group reconvened to develop “draft” language for this Grading and Reporting Guidelines and Procedures document. The GnR committee, principals, and department leaders first reviewed this document in July 2013. In August 2013, the document was shared with the entire HSD staff.

It is important to note that this document represents a starting point in a process that will carry forward through the 2013-14 school year, during which we will continue to evaluate and look for opportunities to improve district practices related to assessment, grading and reporting of student performance. ***The implementation timeline for the grading and reporting guidelines and practices outlined in this document are found in Appendix B.***

### **Core Beliefs**

As we move forward, HSD grading and reporting practices will be designed to align with the following core beliefs:

- No single grade or symbolic representation constitutes feedback that can accurately reflect student achievement, progress, and soft skills development (communication, task completion, teamwork and collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, networking, professionalism, etc.). Therefore, multiple methods for providing feedback are necessary.
- Academic grades need to accurately reflect student achievement/mastery of standards and concepts as outlined in course or grade level KUD documents.
- Feedback shared needs to accurately reflect student progress or growth with respect to academic achievement and soft skills development.
- Feedback related to academic achievement and growth (formal and informal, qualitative and quantitative) needs to inform instructional decision-making and classroom practices including the intentional use of best practices, accommodations and/or modifications as required.

### **Summary**

The guidelines and procedures outlined in this document were crafted to align the rich traditions at HSD with the current research and literature regarding best practice for grading and reporting. The guidelines were developed to be consistent, fair, and definitive while providing flexibility in all grade levels and courses. The common language and expectations reflected in this document will provide the baseline for consistent grading and reporting practices. These guidelines will be shared with stakeholders and community members to promote understanding of how grades are determined and feedback is to be provided to students. They represent immediate recommendations for changes to be implemented at the start of the 2013-14 school year as well as topics for future exploration.

## Common Vocabulary

The following terms are bundled to promote greater understanding of the connections between them.

Term	Definition
<b>Feedback</b>	<p>Transmission of information between and/or among educators, students, parents/guardians. Beginning in the 2013-14 School Year, the student report card will provide three types of feedback:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Academic Achievement Grade</li> <li>2. Social/Work Habits Mark</li> <li>3. Teacher Comments (coded or free form)</li> </ol>
<b>Academic Achievement Grade</b>	<p>Feedback (currently a letter grade that can include a plus or minus) that provides a measure of <b>academic achievement and/or skill development</b> over a given period of time in relation to a specific set of learning goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For Grades 7 – 12, 70% of the academic grade is determined using summative assessment data and 30%* using formal formative assessment data.</li> <li>• For Grades 3 – 6 the split is 60% summative; 40%* formal formative.</li> <li>• For Kindergarten through Grade 2, feedback is more subjective and will not be defined by a percentage split.</li> </ul> <p><i>*Note: No more than 50% of the Formal Formative grade may be Homework.</i></p>
<b>Social/Work Habits Mark</b>	<p>Feedback that provides information on observable student behaviors and practices. At the secondary level, a check in the following three areas indicates the student has met the noted expectations, while a minus indicates a need for improvement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Academic Responsibility</u> -- Student completes coursework on time and is prepared for class daily.</li> <li>2. <u>Participation &amp; Engagement</u> -- Student actively participates in class and engages in the learning activities daily.</li> <li>3. <u>Attitude &amp; Conduct</u> -- Student demonstrates a positive attitude about learning and conducts him or herself in an appropriate manner daily.</li> </ol> <p>At the elementary level, feedback related to other criteria is provided on the report card in addition to the three areas noted above.</p>
<b>Teacher Comment(s)</b>	<p>Qualifying feedback (coded and/or free form) provided by teachers about a student's academic achievement grade and/or their social/work habits.</p>
<b>Assessment</b>	<p>A process or tool used by teachers and students before, during, and after instruction to provide feedback and adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve student achievement and to provide appropriate challenge for all students at their instructional levels.</p>

	<p>There are four categories of PA Assessments as outlined on the PA Standards Aligned System (SAS) Portal: <i>Summative, Formative, Benchmark and Diagnostic.</i>  <a href="http://www.pdesas.org/module/assessment/Search.aspx">http://www.pdesas.org/module/assessment/Search.aspx</a>)</p> <p><i>Summative and formal formative assessment data is used to calculate the academic grade.</i></p>
<b>Summative Assessment</b>	<p>Seeks to evaluate or make an overall judgment of progress made at the end of a defined period of instruction. Summative assessments are designed to produce clear data regarding student accomplishments at key points in his or her academic career.</p> <p>Assessment <i>of</i> Learning</p> <p>Examples of summative assessment tools include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End-of-unit exam</li> <li>• Midterm exam</li> <li>• Final project (paper, artwork, writing sample, etc.)</li> <li>• Final performance or demonstration</li> <li>• Laboratory report</li> <li>• Individual product or portfolio</li> <li>• Any additional assessment of content knowledge or skill development that will not be assessed at another time within the unit of study.</li> </ul>
<b>Informal Formative Assessment</b>	<p><i>A process or interaction</i> used by teachers and students during instruction to provide feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes.</p> <p>Assessment <i>for</i> Learning</p> <p>A process, not a product ... examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of student response systems</li> <li>• "Ticket-Out-the-Door"</li> <li>• Use of student white boards</li> <li>• Homework assessed for completion, not accuracy</li> <li>• Class participation</li> </ul> <p><i>Does not result in a recorded grade.</i></p>
<b>Formal Formative Assessment</b>	<p><i>Formative assessment that does result in a recorded grade.</i></p> <p>Thirty percent (30%) of an academic achievement grade in grades 7 - 12 or 40% in Grades 3 - 6 will include this type of assessment.</p> <p>Examples of formal formative assessment include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework graded for accuracy (can be no more than half of the 30% or 40%)</li> <li>• Classwork graded for accuracy (not just completion)</li> <li>• Lab work graded for accuracy (not just completion)</li> <li>• Quizzes where application of content/skill will be assessed later in a summative assessment</li> <li>• Mini-performances</li> <li>• Practice for assessment of skill development</li> </ul>

<b>Benchmark Assessment</b>	Valid and reliable, prefabricated, district-purchased assessments used to provide feedback to both the teacher and the student about how the student is progressing toward demonstrating proficiency <b>on grade level</b> standards (4Sight for instance). “Locally” created benchmarks can be useful; psychometrics usually absent.
<b>Diagnostic Assessment</b>	Assessments that ascertain (usually prior to instruction) each student’s strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills. Data from these assessments permit the instructor to adjust the curriculum to meet pupils’ unique needs.  Examples of formal formative assessment include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CDTs</li> <li>• GRADE</li> <li>• DRAs</li> <li>• Running Records</li> </ul>
<b>Assessment Item</b>	A question or prompt within a summative or formative assessment (e.g. multiple choice item, constructed response item, performance-based prompt).
<b>Common Assessment</b>	An item or set of items that assess the same rigor of content knowledge and/or skill development for all students in a given grade or course.
<b>Authentic Assessment</b>	Students are asked to perform real-world tasks related to a given content area that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills. <i>Performance or project-based assessments are most effective when designed to require real-world applications.</i>
<b>Rubric</b>	An explicit set of criteria used to evaluate a particular type of work or performance.
<b>Best Practice</b>	The term "Best Practice" has been used to describe "what works" <i>in a particular situation or environment</i> . When data support the success of a practice, it is referred to as a research-based practice or scientifically based practice. A best practice reflects the integration of professional wisdom with the best available empirical evidence when making decisions about how to best lead students in their learning.  Examples (dependent upon a particular situation or environment): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differentiation</li> <li>• Learning experiences chunked into smaller segments</li> <li>• Vocabulary in context</li> <li>• Use of word banks for fill in the blank questions</li> <li>• Use of visual and auditory aids for learning</li> <li>• Multiple representations for instructions (e.g. written, oral, students highlighting or underlining key words in instructions)</li> </ul> <p><i>*See Appendix A for additional examples of best practices.</i></p>

<b>Accommodation</b>	<p>Adaptations or adjustments that <i>do not fundamentally change the learning expectations inherent in the grade level standard</i>; student is held responsible for the same standards as every other student in the class, but the method of demonstrating mastery of the standard may be adjusted; may or may not be reflected in an IEP.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio tape of a lesson or lecture when a student struggles to take notes</li> <li>• Extended time, alteration of task, environment, time, instruction, equipment, or assessment tool while still targeting the same standards of achievement</li> </ul> <p><i>*See Appendix A for additional accommodation examples</i></p>
<b>Modification</b>	<p>Adaptations that <i>fundamentally change the learning expectations inherent in the grade level standard</i>; reflects <i>instructional level work</i> rather than grade level work; written into an IEP</p> <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Grade 4 student with a significant cognitive delay is included for science and while the student may not be ready for the ecosystem, the IEP would write standards based goals from a fundamentally related standard in sorting and classifying.</li> <li>• A freshman ELL must master Grade 7 vocabulary</li> </ul>
<b>PA Academic Standard of Achievement</b>	<p>A statement that articulates what students must know and be able to do by the end of a given grade or course.</p>
<b>PSSA or Keystone Assessment Anchor/Eligible Content</b>	<p>Language used for test construction that identifies the assessment limits related to content or process skills for a given grade level or course.</p>

## The Report Card

Beginning with the 2013 -14 School Year, the student report card will provide feedback on student achievement, behaviors, and practices using a three-prong approach:

1. Academic Grade
2. Effort & Work Habits Mark
3. Teacher Comments (coded and/or free form)

### *The Academic Grade*

The academic grade is reflected using a letter designation (currently A - F with pluses and minuses in grades 3 – 12 except for art, music, physical education at the elementary level, which is graded with an O, S, N scale) and provides feedback about standards-aligned academic achievement only. Standards-aligned “Year-at-a-Glance” documents for all students in all content areas and in all grades and courses are posted on our public curriculum webpage,

<http://curriculum.hempfieldsd.org>, where links to the academic standards and appropriate assessment anchors and eligible content are provided. Academic grades must be consistent, accurate, meaningful and supportive of learning across grades and content areas. The following percentages for assessment data categories will be used in calculating the academic grade in grades 3 - 12:

Grade Span	Summative Assessment Data	Formal Formative Assessment Data
Grades 7 -12	70%	30%*
Grades 3 - 6	60%	40%*
K – Grade 2	N/A	

*\*Note: No more than 50% of the Formal Formative grade may consist of Homework. Examples of summative and formal formative assessment data are in the common vocabulary.*

### ***Social/Work Habits Mark***

In recognition of the importance of providing feedback related to the student’s social/work habits, each student will receive a mark for the following:

1. *Academic Responsibility* -- Student completes coursework on time and is prepared for class daily.
2. *Participation & Engagement* -- Student actively participates in class and engages in the learning activities daily.
3. *Attitude & Conduct* -- Student demonstrates a positive attitude about learning and conducts him or herself in an appropriate manner daily.

A check in these three areas indicates the student has met the noted expectations, while a minus indicates a need for improvement. At the elementary level, feedback related to other social/work habits is provided in addition to the three areas noted above.

### ***Teacher Comments (coded and/or free form)***

The final feedback component will be coded or free form teacher comments. These comments allow teachers to further clarify and expand upon the earned academic grade and/or the social/work habits mark.

### **Redos/Retests**

A student’s grade should accurately reflect what they know, understand and are able to do. One of a teacher’s responsibilities is to accurately assess and summarize a student’s learning and provide feedback on that assessment in the form of an academic grade. Because all students do not learn at the same rate, affording them the opportunity to retake summative assessments provides an alternate learning path for students to demonstrate proficiency with concepts that they failed to learn prior to the first assessment.

Retakes are only offered for summative assessments. Formative assessments by nature are part of the learning process and are used during the instruction; they are given to identify what concepts and skills have not yet been learned and to prepare students for the summative assessment.

In order to qualify to retake on summative assessments (retake exams, resubmit written work, etc.), students will be expected to meet the following criteria:

- *Students must demonstrate that they prepared for the original assessment.* Accountability parameter(s), if desired, will be identified for each class and made known to students at the beginning of the course - they are not to be a surprise. Examples include:
  - The completion of a study packet or guide
  - The completion of all homework assignments for a given unit
  - Conferencing with the teacher prior to the original assessment
  - Other pre-assessment activity.
- *Students must demonstrate that they have taken steps to relearn the material being assessed.* Students who wish to retake an assessment must complete department-defined and teacher-assigned remedial work within 2 weeks of the date the assessment was returned to the student. Examples include:
  - Completion of test corrections
  - Revisiting/completing learning tasks assigned during the unit
  - Conferencing with the teacher after the original assessment
  - Other post-assessment activity.
- *Students will receive the score of the retest, regardless of the score attained on the original assessment.* Once a student has completed the post-assessment work required by the teacher, they should be better prepared to demonstrate their proficiency on the assessed learning objectives than they were for the original assessment.

### **Incompletes/Late Work/Make-Up Work**

Teachers emphasize accountability in meeting timelines and expectations. However, when students struggle to meet timelines, it remains important that assignments be completed to demonstrate levels of achievement on learning goals. Therefore, accepting late assignments is important in order to assure that students meet the learning goals measured by those assignments, providing the submission of work is within manageable timeframes established at the school, departmental and/or classroom level (i.e. end of units, end of quarter, end of semester.)

- All summative assessments must be completed and graded.
- Missing work will be initially recorded in the grade book as an MI (Missing) and will factor into the grade as a zero until students make up the work.
- No penalty for work missed during an excused or unexcused absence (except for a truancy) should be included in calculating the academic grade provided work is made up in a timely manner upon returning to school (not to exceed the number of days absent unless an extenuating circumstance). Work missed as a result of a truant absence (e.g. cut class or school day) will result in a zero.

- Work not completed by the end of a marking period results in an I (Incomplete) except for the final marking period when it factors into the final grade as a zero.

***Care should be taken to ensure that feedback associated with missed or late work does not distort the academic grade but rather is reflected in the Social/Work Habits mark on the report card. Support systems to help students struggling with timely completion of assignments are available to students to assist them in meeting deadlines and completing unfinished work.***

### **Cheating/Plagiarism**

Cheating occurs when a student takes another person's thoughts, writing or work and submits this work as his/her own. Examples of cheating include:

- Citing published works (including Internet sites) without acknowledging and giving credit to the author or source (this is plagiarism).
- Copying another student's answers on a test.
- Using written answers prepared before the test without teacher permission.
- Passing answers to other students on a test in progress or that has been taken previously.
- Talking during a test without permission.
- Stealing tests or using tests stolen by another individual.
- Copying another student's homework with or without their consent.
- Making work available for someone else to copy and claim as his or her own.
- Changing answers on work being corrected without permission.

The penalty for cheating will result in administrative disciplinary action and an alternate form of assessment for the examination, research paper, homework, or other type of evaluation involved in the incident. Additionally, the teacher will notify the parent regarding the incident and will file a report with the principal. A second incident will merit more severe consequences and a parent conference.

### **Extra Credit**

The expectation at HSD is that students will work to demonstrate proficiency on the targeted academic standards of achievement. Students who find themselves with grades lower than they desire should be encouraged to connect with their teacher, seek opportunities to receive extra help, take advantage of redos/retests as offered, access other available supports (tutoring, etc.). Any extra credit offered will: 1) be directly related to learning objectives established for a lesson or unit, and 2) will not constitute more than 1% of the final grade for a quarter or the course.

## Appendix A

### Examples of Best Practices and/or Accommodations

(Determined by situation and/or environment; may or may not be written into an IEP)

Best Practices	Accommodations
<p><b>Presentation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning experiences in smaller segments</li> <li>• Vocabulary in context</li> <li>• Visual and auditory aids</li> <li>• Speaking more slowly</li> <li>• Opportunity to access instructions in multiple forms (e.g. written and oral; projected)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Presentation:</b></p>
<p><b>Homework:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced homework assignments</li> <li>• Extended time on major assignments</li> <li>• Opportunity to use a computer</li> </ul>	<p><b>Homework:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dictating answers to parent or aide</li> <li>• Audio recording of instructions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Testing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of resources including word banks</li> <li>• Preview of test questions</li> <li>• No penalty for handwriting</li> <li>• Adjusted test length or formatting</li> <li>• Extended time for tests</li> <li>• Student highlights key words/phrases in directions</li> <li>• Choice when and where appropriate</li> </ul>	<p><b>Testing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple testing sessions offered</li> <li>• Limited choices for multiple choice questions (use judiciously)</li> <li>• Recordings of required reading*</li> <li>• Peer or adult assistance with reading*</li> <li>• Oral exams with oral responses*</li> <li>• No penalty for spelling or grammar**</li> <li>• Test answers recorded**</li> <li>• Opportunity to create a model instead of writing**</li> <li>• Dictating or illustrating answers on short essay**</li> </ul>
<p><b>Assignments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced assignments</li> <li>• Individual contracts</li> <li>• Emphasis on key points</li> <li>• Task analysis of assignments</li> <li>• Multiple choice spelling tests</li> <li>• Tiered assignments</li> <li>• Assignment menu</li> <li>• Extended time for oral and/or written response</li> <li>• Alternative readings</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assignments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extended time for written response Alternative readings*</li> <li>• Recorded assignments*</li> <li>• Opportunity to respond orally**</li> <li>• Opportunity to create a model instead of writing**</li> <li>• Dramatize instead of writing**</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Environment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small group setting</li> <li>• Preferential seating</li> <li>• Alternative seating</li> <li>• Study carrel for independent work</li> <li>• Minimized visual distractions</li> <li>• More physical space for learner</li> <li>• Headphones</li> </ul>
<p><b>Learning Materials/Resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copy of teacher notes</li> <li>• Prepared study guides</li> <li>• Guided outline for note taking</li> <li>• Textbook in native language</li> <li>• Providing reading materials at student's instructional/lower grade level</li> </ul>	<p><b>Learning Materials/Resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Textbook in native language*</li> <li>• Providing reading materials at student's instructional/lower grade level*</li> </ul>

\*These are considered accommodations in all subjects except Reading. In Reading, these are considered modifications unless offered to the entire class as part of instruction.

\*\* These are considered accommodations in all subjects except Writing. In Writing, these are considered modifications unless offered to the entire class as a part of instruction.

## **Appendix B**

### **Implementation Timeline**

#### **2013 – 14 School Year**

For the 2013 - 14 school year the following changes will be implemented:

- A student's academic grade will be calculated using the percentage designations outlined in this document:
  - *Grades 7-12:* 70% Summative Assessment Data - 30% Formal Formative Data
  - *Grades 3-6:* 60% Summative Assessment Data - 40% Formal Formative Data
- Feedback on *Work Habits* will be provided on all report cards grade K – 12.
- Narrative comments will be utilized along with coded comments on all report cards grade K – 12.
- A new secondary report card will be used to facilitate reporting using the three-pronged approach described in this document
- The guidelines regarding Cheating/Plagiarism and Extra Credit will be in full effect.

#### **2014 – 15 School Year**

The committee recognizes the importance of reflecting on these guidelines and allowing time for teachers to process how best to integrate these changes into their current classroom practices. Therefore, implementation of the guidelines related to the following topics will not be required until the 2014 - 15 school year:

- Redos/Retests
- Incompletes/Late Work/Make-Up Work

*Even though implementation of the guidelines related to these topics will not be enforced until the 2014 – 15 School Year, teachers are encouraged to start incorporating elements of these guidelines into their current practices wherever possible in preparation for the full implementation of these guidelines in 2014-15.*

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