

Common Grading Challenges

This resource outlines some of the challenges and considerations around grading during the implementation process. These are some of the more common challenges that arise, but please note that this is not an exhaustive list, and some grading challenges are not reflected here.

Common Challenge	Consideration
Teachers/school leaders have different perspectives on the purpose for grading.	The Implementation Team should share the varying perspectives on the purpose(s) for grading before beginning the process of refining a grading policy. Refer to the following research as a starting point: • Grading Principles and Guidelines (Great Schools Partnership) • The Opportunity Myth (TNTP) • Grading and Reporting Student Learning (Thomas Guskey) Once a grading policy is refined/created, it is important that there be a clear rationale for <i>how</i> and <i>why</i> these decisions were made and how the grading policy aligns with the curriculum (refer to decisions made in II.3.C).
There is not currently a school- or system-level assessment and/or grading policy, so there is considerable variance in how and what teachers are grading within the curriculum. This challenge is directly linked to II.3.C and determining an assessment strategy. If it is not clear what assessments/assignments will be graded across the school/system, variance in <i>what</i> and <i>how</i> things are being graded is inevitable.	The Implementation Team is tasked with constructing a grading policy for the system in an effort to provide clarity and guidance, but also to ensure that there is a common grading experience for all students. The Implementation Team will need to consider how the grading policy is working in tandem with the assessment strategy, student data review, and PLCs. Refer to II.3.C during this time, and circle back when you have completed Key Action II.4.

Some students are passing their classes but are not showing proficiency on standardized assessments.	When finalizing the purpose(s) for grading, if it is determined that grades should be a predictor for student performance on standardized assessment, ensure that common grading policy reflects that purpose. Ensuring clear procedures for what is being graded, as well as how it is being graded through student work review in PLCs or collaborative planning time will help to ensure a similar bar for student responses. This challenge often arises when teachers are unclear what their criteria for success are on a specific assignment/assessment.
The state/city/district dictates a specific number of assignments/types of assignments that need to be in the grade book.	Make sure to keep this in mind during your common assessment inventory and when you are reviewing the materials in steps II.3.B and II.3.C. Ensure that these requirements align with your common grading policy in II.3.D.
Since implementing the new curriculum, students' grades have dramatically dipped.	Preemptively addressing this possibility with teachers, kids, and families is a crucial part of the communication plan the Implementation Team creates during Phase II. Consider including in your grading policy that students may redo assignments for partial/whole credit when a student shows mastery of the content being assessed.
Teachers are having a challenging time finding enough assignments in the materials to fill the required number of grades.	Ideally, a system's grading policy aligns with the chosen curriculum, and if it doesn't, the system troubleshoots solutions proactively. In the event this is not possible, it is first important that this challenge be identified prior to the school year beginning so that an appropriate plan can be put in place to address it. To prepare for this potential challenge, schools and systems need to have thoroughly completed II.3A–II.3C. Once that is complete, if it is found that there are not enough assignments within the curriculum to meet the required number, then the Implementation Team should provide guidance to schools about the approved supplemental assignments to provide to students. Many materials have optional extension assignments that the Implementation Team can include in the assessment strategy.