

Principles and Practices of Fort Osage Standards-Based Grading

Introduction:

In light of changes made to the grading process, it's important for all district instructional staff members to have a common understanding of the key principles and practices that are essential to effective grading. The purpose of this document is to describe key elements so that teachers can ensure that they are incorporating them into their daily practices.

In many cases, teachers will need to work as teams within their schools to determine exact processes for implementing these ideas. Because different buildings and grade levels have somewhat different needs and circumstances, implementation details should be worked out at the building level to ensure a fair process for all students.

Principle ONE

Success is defined by what students learn rather than what teachers teach.

Effective Practices:

- a. Give students additional opportunities to complete assignments, quizzes, tests and replace grades with updated information. Expect students to demonstrate increased learning in order to earn the opportunity for retakes.
- b. Make introductory activities in a unit worth fewer points than culminating assignments and assessments that occur after significant instruction has taken place. Teacher teams or schools may also decide that homework and formative assessments should not be counted for points at all.
- c. Remember that it's okay not to record everything students do in the gradebook. Students can learn and improve from feedback and additional practice, without assignments being recorded.
- d. Do not award extra credit, particularly for things that are not directly related to the learning goals.

Principle TWO

Ensuring mastery of the most important standards is a powerful way to improve achievement.

Effective Practices:

- a. Focus instruction, and particularly assignments and assessments, on the identified priority standards for your subject/grade. Provide enrichment and extension for students using objectives that have not been identified as priority standards.
- b. There are no minimum or maximum required assignments or assessments for individual standards. Provide multiple opportunities for mastery for students, but remember that not all learning opportunities need to be recorded as grades.
- c. Teachers in kindergarten through sixth grade monitor student progress toward mastery of standards by recording current progress toward meeting scoring scale criteria. Secondary teachers use the scoring scale as a guide for monitoring student progress and communicating with students and parents, but record points earned out of points possible in the gradebook.
- d. Provide reteaching opportunities for key standards for students who haven't mastered them. Consider requiring students to submit additional practice to show increased learning before they are allowed to retake an assessment.

Principle THREE

Students will be more successful if they understand what they're expected to learn and why that learning is valuable.

Effective Practices:

- a. Utilize learning goals in student-friendly language and devise ways (either electronically or on paper) for students to monitor their own progress toward these learning goals. Involve parents as well whenever possible.
- b. When a student has been unsuccessful on your assessment of a standard, ask him/her to come up with an alternate way to show mastery. Once you've agreed on and the student completes an alternate task, you can adjust the grade accordingly.
- c. Avoid assigning mass practice homework to students. Research shows that practice makes permanent (not perfect); so having students practice something that they haven't learned well can actually make it more difficult for them to succeed in the long run when they have to "unlearn" something they've done incorrectly.

Principle FOUR

Effort plays a role in student achievement, but should be separated from performance on academic standards.

Effective Practices:

- a. Effort will be reported on the report card through rubric standards for participation, work completion and behavior. Common rubrics will be used to communicate students' demonstration of these important work and life skills.
- b. Emphasize the importance of effort in ongoing feedback and communication with students. Smart is something you get, not something you are.
- c. Avoid assigning zeros for work that students don't turn in. Mark the assignment incomplete and require students to make it up so that their academic grade isn't penalized for their insufficient work habits.

Principle FIVE

All students can achieve success and need different approaches to realize their potential.

Effective Practices:

- a. Work with your team to design and implement interventions to ensure that ALL STUDENTS achieve the "non-negotiable" priority standards for each course.
- b. Design systems to ensure that students turn in acceptable work, especially on important assignments and assessments. The penalty for not turning in an assignment (or turning in a very poor quality assignment) should NOT be that students don't ever have to do the work. Require students to turn things in, even if they're turning them in late.
- c. Differentiate instruction and assessments by providing students with different (but equitable) means of demonstrating their mastery of learning goals.