Grading for Learning Manual

Table of Contents

Background

The creation of the Urbandale Community School District's 2013 strategic improvement plan identified multiple opportunities for strategic improvement throughout the UCSD system. One of these, monitoring and effectively communicating student learning, identified gaps, inaccuracies, and inefficiencies with the traditional system of reporting student learning. Grading for learning, or basing student grades on demonstrations of learning, is consistent with best practices and widely supported in current educational literature.

In 2015-16, a diverse team of Urbandale educators representing K-12 teachers, teacher leaders, and building and district administrators embarked on a study of current and best practices with respect to grading students' learning. This "Grading for Learning" team developed guiding principles for evaluating and reporting student learning. These guiding principles, based on their extensive research and work, are outlined in this handbook.

Executive Summary

The publication of the landmark review of education in the United States, *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), is often credited with starting the movement toward rigorous standards in education. Prior to that time, what was taught in classrooms varied from state-to-state, city-to-city and even classroom-to-classroom. *A Nation at Risk* highlighted these inconsistencies and dangers of holding students to only "minimum requirements" as they advance through the educational system and the subsequent lack of preparedness for college and careers students will experience upon exiting the system.

As the standards movement has matured, more consistent high expectations for students have been established through a thorough review of rapidly changing demands for a highly skilled and educated workforce. This is not unique to the United States. School systems. "The move to establish more rigorous standards and focus on "exit outcomes" is not exclusive to the United States: in fact, it seems that a desire not to fall behind other countries led to reorganizing and repurposing curricula around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experience" (Schimmer, 2016, p. 8). This work led to districts, then states, then the nation to develop and adopt standards for learning intended for all students.

Standards do not equal standardization. "One of the unfortunate byproducts of the standards movement has been the onslaught of standardized testing" (Schimmer, 2016, p. 9). While standards refer to the quality of learning students must demonstrate, standardization seeks to make the demonstration of learning universal. High standards of

<u>learning for all can be established without standardization</u>. It was not the goal of the UCSD "Grading for Learning" team to standardize education. Rather, the goal of this team was to ensure UCSD establishes and frequently reviews relevant and challenging standards for learning and ensures all students meet these high standards in order to be prepared for the next stage in their lives.

Establishing standards leads to greater certainty in what students will be learning and what they will be expected to do with their learning. Reporting that learning in a quantifiable format is known as grading. Historically, a variety of factors influence student grades. However, if grades are to reflect student learning, the grades must meet certain criteria.

1. Grades must be accurate. The grades must reflect the performance of the student.
2. Grades must be fair. The grade must not be influenced by gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, political attitudes, or a plethora of other factors unrelated to academic performance.
3. Grades must be specific. A grade is not only an evaluation, but feedback. Students, parents, and teachers must understand not only what the grade is, they must also have sufficiently specific information that they can collaborate to use the teacher's feedback to improve student performance and learning.
4. Grades must be timely. While there is inevitably a "final" that appears on an official transcript, particularly in secondary schools, that is but a postscript on a very long letter. Much earlier than the final grade, students should receive a steady stream of feedback, much in the way that students in music or sports receive feedback from coaches that is designed not merely to evaluate their performance but to improve it.
(Reeves, 2011, p. 9).

Grades that meet these criteria will be an accurate representation of student learning, uncluttered by other factors that, while extremely important, do not lead to greater understanding of what a student knows and is able to do with respect to established standards of learning.

The guiding principles established by the UCSD Grading for Learning team ensure student grades will meet these criteria. Further, they have established provisions for evaluating and reporting non-academic behaviors and habits that are also critical for student success. These guiding principles will help educators throughout the UCSD system ensure the district's mission of teaching all, reaching all is practiced in every classroom, for every student, every day.

Reeves, D. B. (2011). *Elements of grading: A guide to effective practice.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

Schimmer, T. (2016). *Grading from the inside out: Bringing accuracy to student assessment through a standards-based mindset.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

UCSD Grading for Learning Task Force Members

Elementary	Middle School	High School	Curriculum & Instruction	District Leadership
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Core Beliefs

The UCSD mission of "teaching all, reaching all" will be fully realized when each student demonstrates high levels of learning in every classroom, every day. In order to do this, classroom systems with high expectations and learning goals for every student that are structured around continuous improvement cycles of instruction, assessment, and feedback are necessary. Providing stakeholders with fair, accurate, specific, and timely information regarding student progress toward high standards of learning, as well as feedback for growth, is the aim of grading for learning in UCSD.

Accurate	Grades represent student learning on predetermined curriculum standards. Non-academic factors, while important, are reported separately and not part of the academic grade.
Fair	The same level of student performance receives the same grade, even if the teachers are different.
Specific	Grading criteria and learning goals should be so clear that students can accurately determine the grade they earn, even before it is evaluated by the teacher.
Timely	Feedback to students is so timely that students can use it to improve their performance on upcoming practice and assessments.

Guiding Principles for Grading

1. Grades are aligned to the academic standards for a course.

2. Grades are based on a body of student-produced evidence.

3. Determination of a grade is based on established proficiency levels, which describe academic learning and levels of performance aligned to course/grade-level standards.

4. Grades are based on a student's demonstrated achievement of course/grade-level standards. Achievement of behavioral objectives is important enough to report separately and does not factor into the academic grade.

Guiding Principle #1:
Grades are aligned to the academic standards for a course.

        Standards specify what all students should know and be able to do. Standards for a course/grade level are established through the UCSD curriculum review process, and are aligned to state of Iowa and/or national expectations for student learning. During the curriculum review process, standards are "unpacked" by teachers/content experts. The unpacking process results in clearly defined learning targets for students, along with consistent understanding of student performance by teachers.

        Teachers participate in the UCSD Curriculum Review Process (Appendix A) in order to study and implement standards for learning. Once standards are unpacked and learning targets are defined, teachers can write quality assessments designed to measure student learning and achievement of the standards. Valid, varied, and reliable high-quality assessments are used to measure student knowledge of a standard. Multiple pieces of evidence of student learning are collected using a variety of assessment techniques (i.e. written, verbal, performance, project, etc.). Alignment between the desired student learning result and evidence used to determine student learning is essential.

Implications for Professional Practice

Best Practices that Support Guiding Principle #1	Practices that Should NOT be Used
Clearly define levels of proficiency to describe when a standard is met	Guess what proficiency looks like and what proficiency level students are at
Utilize rubrics to determine student performance on pieces of evidence	Accumulate points as a grade or "evidence" of student learning
Align Depth of Knowledge of standards and descriptions of proficiency (i.e. content and level of performance)	Assess on content only
Align assessments to standards	Random activities and assessments not aligned or misaligned to standards
Utilize quality assessments as evidence of learning and collect multiple pieces of evidence for each reporting topic to determine grades	Base grades on averages of disjointed activities
Collaborate with other teachers to ensure inter-rater reliability	Fail to collaborate with other teachers to ensure scoring proficiencies are interpreted the same way

Use recent and consistent evidence of student achievement to support the determination of their level of proficiency	Provide only one opportunity for students to demonstrate proficiency
Give feedback to students. Once feedback is given, provide opportunities for re-teaching, re-learning, and re-assessment (i.e. utilize cycles of PDSA to improve learning)	Give an assessment without a plan to use the information (i.e. give a formative quiz without changing instruction or providing feedback)
Unpack standards to define what students need to have knowledge of, understand, and do	Give extra credit or assignments that are not aligned to standards

Supporting Literature for Guiding Principle #1

Brookhart, S. M. (2011). *Grading and learning: Practices that support student achievement.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press
    Grading of intended student outcomes/learning targets (p. 13)
    Performance-based measures instead of effort (p. 16)
    Clear definition of performance standards vs. content standards (p. 19)
    Rubrics (p. 51)

DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & Many, T. (2010). *Learning by doing: A handbook for professional learning communities at work.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
    Chapter 3: Creating a Focus on Learning

Gobble, T., Onuscheck, M., Reibel, A., & Twadell, E. (2016). *Proficiency-based assessment: Process, not product.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
    Chapter 1: Beyond the Formative and Summative Divide
    Chapter 2: Preparation

Guskey, T. R. & Bailey, J. M. (2010). *Developing standards-based report cards.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
    Defining standards (p. 13-15)
    Developing reporting standards (p. 22)

Marzano, R. J. (2010). *Formative assessment and standards-based grading.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
    Chapter 2: The Anatomy of Formative Assessment
    Chapter 4: Designing Assessments

O'Connor, K. (2011). *A repair kit for grading: 15 fixes for broken grades.* Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
    Fix 1: Don't include student behaviors (effort, participation, adherence to class

rules, etc.) in grades; include only achievement.
Fix 8: Don't assign grades using inappropriate or unclear performance standards; provide clear descriptions of achievement expectations.
Fix 10: Don't rely on evidence gathered using assessments that fail to meet standards of quality; rely only on quality assessments

Wormeli, R. (2006). *Fair isn't always equal: Assessing and grading in the differentiated classroom.* Westervile, OH: National Middle School Association.
Chapter 3: Principles of Successful Assessment in the Differentiated Classroom

Guiding Principle #2:
Grades are based on a body of student-produced evidence.

Standards establish what students should know and be able to do as a result of their learning. Evidence is an opportunity for students to demonstrate their understanding of a standard as defined by proficiency levels. Each individual piece of student-produced evidence receives a mark that corresponds to a defined level of proficiency. These marks are aggregated over time to determine a student's overall grade with respect to standards.

A body of evidence of student learning has several important characteristics. Opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding must meet the following criteria:

- **Valid, reliable, accurate**: the same piece of evidence should be interpreted by different teachers in the same way. In other words, a student's performance should receive the same mark by teachers of the same course or grade.

- **Aligned to proficiency scales**: proficiency scales define what students should know and be able to do as a result of their understanding of grade-level standards. Both basic or foundational information as well as grade-level information are described in the scales. A piece of evidence should align to the expected level of learning for students at the time the evidence is gathered. For example, a formative assessment given at the beginning of a unit of instruction may only require a "basic" level of understanding, and an assessment given toward the end of a unit of instruction may require a proficient level of understanding of grade level standards. (See Guiding Principle #3 for further information on proficiency scales.)

- **Multiple and varied**: over the course of learning standards, students should be given opportunities to demonstrate their understanding multiple times in a variety of appropriate formats. The format of the assessment needs to match the defined proficiency. For example, if the proficient definition of a standard requires students to "explain" something, it would be inappropriate to assess that skill with multiple-choice questions.

Student-produced evidence of learning that meet the criteria above may be considered in the determination of a student's grade. When determining an overall grade for a reporting topic, teachers need to consider the following:

- **Performance Level**: Assessments must be designed to require a certain level of performance in relation to the defined proficiency levels of unpacked standards (see "aligned to proficiency scales" above). In the learning cycle, students need to be given opportunities to perform at multiple levels on a proficiency scale in order to determine the full scope of their understanding.

11

- **Prioritizing most recent and comprehensive evidence:** Multiple pieces of high-quality evidence are necessary in order for students to demonstrate their full range of understanding with respect to a standard. These multiple assessment opportunities have varied purposes including an opportunity for students to reflect on current performance, an opportunity for teachers to make instructional adjustments, and an opportunity for teachers and students to make final determinations of learning with respect to academic standards. Often, students' first attempts when learning new standards contain errors or misconceptions. As students continue to practice and teachers continue to refine their instruction, greater understanding will often replace student misconceptions or errors. The most recent and/or most thorough (with respect to content and depth of knowledge of reporting topics) evidence of student learning should replace initial attempts or practice when making final grading determinations. Averaging within a reporting topic will distort the representation of a student's understanding for that topic.

  For example, over the course of four weeks, a student is given one opportunity per week to demonstrate their learning on a particular reporting topic. Their performance is as follows:

	Week 1 Evidence #1	Week 2 Evidence #2	Week 3 Evidence #3	Week 4 Evidence #4	Final Grade
Mark on a piece of evidence	**2** (Approaching GLS*)	**2** (Approaching GLS)	**3** (Meeting GLS)	**3** (Meeting GLS)	??

*GLS = Grade Level Standard

  In this example, the student's final grade would be **"3"** (meeting GLS) for the following reasons:
    1. All four assessments address the same reporting topic/content.
    2. The student learned over the course of four weeks and was able to perform at the proficient level the last two times.
    3. The four pieces of evidence are not averaged to determine the grade as this would essentially punish students for not understanding right away. Where they end with respect to learning is what is important, not where they start.

  In this system, the **teacher** has to compare student performance over time to proficiency scales in order to determine final grades on a reporting topic.

- **Validity and reliability of the collective body of evidence:** Being able to consistently demonstrate a skill or understanding of an academic standard multiple times in multiple contexts is something students will need throughout their lives. A student's final score for a particular standard will need to be

12

determined utilizing multiple pieces of evidence. Collaboratively designed pieces of evidence are particularly helpful in determining a student's level of understanding. These pieces of evidence could be created by PLC teams, buildings/departments, or by the district using representative teacher teams.

Additional expectations with respect to student-produced evidence include:

Homework – Homework is practice. Teachers have the choice to use homework aligned to the course/grade level academic standards as a way to reinforce concepts, allow students opportunities to practice and/or provide feedback to students on their performance. Homework completion can be tracked using the UCSD "Building a Better U" rubric. Homework is not included in the body of evidence used to determine a student's grade on an academic standard.

Implications for Professional Practice

Best Practices that Support Guiding Principle #2	Practices that Should NOT be Used
● Base all assessment/evidence opportunities on levels of proficiency as defined by the academic standards 　○ Organize parts of a task by standard for ease in record-keeping	● Assign an arbitrary number of points for an assessment
● Reveal assessment components at the beginning of a unit 　○ Design assessments *prior* to instruction 　○ Align each assessment item to the corresponding proficiency level 　○ Include multiple levels of proficiency (i.e. basic, proficient, advanced)	● Reveal components of summative assessments right before the exam or as part of a "review"
● Work in collaboration to develop (and score) assessments 　○ Work with PLC colleagues to develop assessments prior to instruction 　○ Work toward collaboratively scoring common assessments	● Work in isolation

13

Best Practices that Support Guiding Principle #2	Practices that Should NOT be Used

● Assign meaningful work
    ○ Assign only meaningful work that will allow you to pinpoint student understanding according to the proficiency scales
    ○ Give students opportunities to practice while you are available to answer questions
    ○ Let students practice without tying it to their grade
	● Grade stacks of work that is not aligned to academic standards or does not give meaningful information regarding student understanding/level of performance regarding academic standards

● Create tiered assessments
    ○ Include multiple levels of proficiency (basic, proficient, advanced)
    ○ Group questions together by academic standard AND level of proficiency for ease in scoring
    ○ Don't penalize students for attempts at advanced questions if they go above and beyond grade-level expectations
	● Create assessments from test-generators, without considering how each question is aligned to the content and level of performance expected in the academic standards.

● Set deadlines and hold students accountable
    ○ Check in frequently for long-term projects and/or set multiple deadlines for various parts of a project
    ○ Require students who fail to meet deadlines to complete the work
    ○ Record failure to meet deadlines as a reflection of Career and College Readiness Skills rather than a reflection of academic learning
	● Set fixed and inflexible deadlines for student work with harsh penalties for failing to meet the deadline and/or no support for students in managing the deadlines

Supporting Literature for Guiding Principle #2

Brookhart, S. M. (2011). *Grading and learning: Practices that support student achievement.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press
    Chapter 4: Designing and Grading Assessments to Reflect Student Achievement

Burke, K. (2010). *Balanced assessment: From formative to summative.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
    Chapter 3: Common Assessments: A Community of Assessors
    Chapter 8: Summative Assessment and Evaluation: The Last Judgment

Dougherty, E. (2012). *Assignments matter: Making the connections that help students meet standards.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
    Chapter 1: Why Assignments Matter
    Chapter 3: Crafting an Assignment
    Chapter 8: Assignments as Data

Gobble, T., Onuscheck, M., Reibel, A., & Twadell, E. (2016). *Proficiency-based assessment: Process, not product.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
Chapter 5: Evaluation

Guskey, T. R. & Jung, L. A. (2013). *Answers to essential questions about standards, assessments, grading, & reporting.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
Part II: Assessments

Heflebower, T., Hoegh, J. K. & Warrick, P. (2014). *A school leader's guide to standards-based grading.* Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research.
Chapter 3: Effective Assessments

Marzano, R. J. (2010). *Formative assessment and standards-based grading.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
Chapter 1: Research and Theory

Moss. C. M. & Brookhart, S. M. (2012). *Learning targets: Helping students aim for understanding in today's lesson.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
Chapter 8: Using Learning Targets to Guide Summative Assessment and Grading

O'Connor, K. (2011). *A repair kit for grading: 15 fixes for broken grades.* Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
Fix 8: Don't assign grades using inappropriate or unclear performance standards; provide clear descriptions of achievement expectations.
Fix 10: Don't rely on evidence gathered using assessments that fail to meet standards of quality; rely only on quality assessments.
Fix 13: Don't use information from formative assessments and practice to determine grades; use only summative evidence.
Fix 14: Don't summarize evidence accumulated over time when learning is developmental and will grow with time and repeated opportunities; in those instances, emphasize more recent achievement.

Schimmer, T. (2016). *Grading from the inside out: Bringing accuracy to student assessment through a standards-based mindset.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
Chapter 6: How to Repurpose Homework
Chapter 8: How to Use Levels of Proficiency

Wormeli, R. (2006). *Fair isn't always equal: Assessing and grading in the differentiated classroom.* Westervile, OH: National Middle School Association.
Chapter 4: Tiering Assessments
Chapter 5: Creating Good Test Questions

Guiding Principle #3:
Determination of a grade is based on established proficiency levels, which describe academic learning and levels of performance aligned to course/grade-level standards.

Scaled descriptors of performance (proficiency scales) describe specific attributes and performances students demonstrate in order to confirm learning. Proficiency scales with fewer levels have higher inter-rater reliability than proficiency scales with more levels. For example, in the traditional 100-point system, there are 101 levels of performance (0 to 100) that would need to be described in order to discern the difference in learning between levels. In this example it is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to determine the difference in understanding between a student scoring a 93, for example, and a 92 or 94. Further, when there are fewer levels of performance described for a particular standard, there is a much greater likelihood that two different teachers will consistently interpret student work as it relates to the proficiency scales. This means there is a far greater likelihood of the same level of student performance receiving the same score according to the scale, even if there are two different teachers interpreting the work. In this way, we can work to ensure a student's understanding will be represented and reported accurately and fairly regardless of the classroom they are in.

A grade based on consistent use of proficiency scales with clear descriptors of performance results in a more accurate representation of a student's mastery of standards at the end of a reporting period. Studies have shown greater reliability of a score using a smaller scale. "...studies have shown that the reliability of a score obtained by a single teacher using the scale presented in this book [four-point integer scale] is .719, whereas the reliability of a score obtained using the [100] point system is .294" (Marzano, 2006, p. 118). Reliability when using this four-point scale increases as more teachers use it to evaluate the same student's work. "Additionally, when two teachers independently score an assessment using the scale, the combined score has a reliability of .822. If four teachers independently score each assessment, the reliability of the combined score is .901" (Marzano, 2006, p.118).

Unpacked standards define specific information students must know and/or skills they must perform in order for educators in the UCSD system to feel confident that the students understand and learn what is being taught. When students demonstrate understanding of the knowledge and skills represented in the unpacked standards, UCSD educators can conclude that students are prepared for the next phase in their education and/or career.

UCSD Scales for Learning

Grades K-5*

Score	Level of Performance/ Understanding	Description
4	Exceeding grade level standard	The student consistently and independently demonstrates understanding of grade-level standards. Student performance reveals they consistently demonstrate in-depth inferences and applications that go beyond what was explicitly taught in class.
3	Meeting grade level standard	The student consistently and independently demonstrates understanding of information and skills – simple and complex – that represent grade-level standards and expectations for learning.
2	Approaching grade level standard	The student demonstrates understanding of foundational information and skills that are represented in grade-level standards. Though the student has gaps in learning of more complex information and skills, he/she is beginning to understand grade-level standards.
1	Beginning	The student demonstrates significant gaps in understanding information and skills that are represented in grade-level standards. Progress toward approaching grade level standards is inconsistent.
0	No evidence	Based on student evidence that has been collected, the student has not demonstrated any understanding of grade-level information and skills.
IN	Incomplete	The student has not completed enough evidence for the teacher to determine to what extent he/she demonstrates understanding of grade-level standards.
NA	Not assessed	This content was not assessed during this reporting period.

*The above scale represents a generic description of student understanding. Standard-specific language is included in the scale for each reporting topic at a grade level and aligns to the levels of understanding described in this scale.

Grades 6-12*

Score	Level of Performance/ Understanding	Description
4	Exceeding grade level standard	The student consistently and independently demonstrates understanding of grade-level standards. Student performance reveals they consistently demonstrate in-depth inferences and applications that go beyond what was explicitly taught in class.
3.5	Partially exceeding grade level standard	The student consistently and independently demonstrates understanding of grade-level standards. Student performance reveals they occasionally demonstrate in-depth inferences and applications that go beyond what was explicitly taught in class.
3	Meeting grade level standard	The student consistently and independently demonstrates understanding of information and skills – simple and complex – that represent grade-level standards and expectations for learning.
2.5	Partially meeting grade level standard	The student demonstrates some understanding of information and skills – simple and complex - that are represented in grade-level standards, although he/she has gaps in learning.
2	Approaching grade level standard	The student demonstrates understanding of foundational information and skills that are represented in grade-level standards. Though the student has gaps in learning of more complex information and skills, he/she is beginning to understand grade-level standards.
1.5	Partially approaching grade level standard	The student demonstrates understanding of some foundational information and skills that are represented in grade-level standards, although he/she consistently shows gaps in understanding.
1	Beginning	The student demonstrates significant gaps in understanding information and skills that are represented in grade-level standards. Progress toward approaching grade level standards is inconsistent.
0	No evidence	Based on student evidence that has been collected, the student has not demonstrated any understanding of grade-level information and skills.
IN	Incomplete	The student has not completed enough evidence for the teacher to determine to what extent he/she demonstrates understanding of grade-level standards.
NA	Not assessed	This content was not assessed during this reporting period.

*The above scale represents a generic description of student understanding. Standard-specific language is included in the scale for each reporting topic at a grade level and aligns to the levels of understanding described in this scale.

Implications for Professional Practice

Best Practices that Support Guiding Principle #3	Practices that Should NOT be Used
Formative assessment that is closely aligned to levels of student performance as described by the scales.	Scoring work and assigning "points" that do not correspond to descriptions of student performance.
Use high-quality assessments aligned to levels of student performance as described by the scales.	Busy work or assignments that are not aligned to scales.
Organize grade book/reporting instruments by standards of learning	Organize grade book/reporting instruments by assignment title or weighted categories of assignments
Evaluate student performance according to preset standards with scales to describe performance levels	Evaluate student performance as compared to other students
Provide clear descriptions of achievement expectations for students and parents	Assign grades using inappropriate or unclear performance standards
Use professional judgment and knowledge of content/skills to determine student proficiency based on evidence they provide	Rely on a grade program to automatically calculate grades/scores (i.e. averaging)
Identify the standards for each assessment or assignment and create questions aligned to multiple levels of performance descriptions in the scales (i.e. Exceeding, Meeting, Approaching)	Create a test based on topics covered during instruction
Align assessment format to levels of performance and expectations articulated in the standards (i.e. if the performance level requires students to analyze, give them an opportunity to analyze)	Use one format (i.e. multiple choice, essay, etc.) for an entire assessment without regard to the varying performance levels
Align instruction and assessment to the standards and descriptors of performance in the scales	Align instruction and assessment to topics in a text
Use the integer scale to assign scores, giving priority to more recent and/or more comprehensive evidence	Use the 100 point scale and averaging all assignments/assessments together
Provide enrichment opportunities for students at advanced performance levels as described on the academic scales.	Give extra credit for work

Supporting Literature for Guiding Principle #3

Brookhart, S. M. (2011). *Grading and learning: Practices that support student achievement.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press
  Chapter 4: Designing and Grading Assessments to Reflect Student Achievement

Gobble, T., Onuscheck, M., Reibel, A., & Twadell, E. (2016). *Proficiency-based assessment: Process, not product.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
  Chapter 3: Incubation

Guskey, T. R. & Jung, L. A. (2013). *Answers to essential questions about standards, assessments, grading, & reporting.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
  Chapter 4: Developing Reporting Standards

Heflebower, T., Hoegh, J. K. & Warrick, P. (2014). *A school leader's guide to standards-based grading.* Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research.
  Chapter 2: Prioritized Standards and Proficiency Scales
  Chapter 4: Meaningful Grades

Marzano, R. J. (2006). *Classroom assessment & grading that work.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
  Chapter 3: A Scale That Measures Learning Over Time
  Chapter 6: Final Scores and Grades

Marzano, R. J. (2010). *Formative assessment and standards-based grading.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
  Chapter 3: The Need for a New Scale.
  Chapter 5: Tracking Student Progress
  Chapter 6: Grading and Reporting

O'Connor, K. (2011). *A repair kit for grading: 15 fixes for broken grades.* Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
  Fix #7: Don't organize information in grading records by assessment methods or simply summarize into a single grade; organize and report evidence by standards/learning goals.
  Fix #8: Don't assign grades using inappropriate or unclear performance standards; provide clear descriptions of achievement expectations.
  Fix #9: Don't assign grades based on a student's achievement compared to other students; compare each student's performance to preset standards
  Fix #11: Don't rely only on the mean; consider other measures of central tendency and use professional judgment

Reeves, D. B. (2011). *Elements of grading: A guide to effective practice.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
Chapter 2: The Grading Debate
Chapter 3: How to Improve Accuracy
Chapter 5: How to Improve Specificity

Schimmer, T. (2016). *Grading from the inside out: Bringing accuracy to student assessment through a standards-based mindset.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
Chapter 8: How to Use Levels of Proficiency
Chapter 10: How to Use Standards-Based Reporting

Wormeli, R. (2006). *Fair isn't always equal: Assessing and grading in the differentiated classroom.* Westervile, OH: National Middle School Association.
Chapter 5:   Tiering Assessments
Chapter 12: Grading Scales
Chapter 13: Gradebook Formats for the Differentiated Classroom
Chapter 14: Responsive Report Card Formats

Guiding Principle #4:
Grades are based on a student's demonstrated achievement of course/grade-level standards. Achievement of behavioral objectives is important enough to report separately using the UCSD "Building a Better U" rubrics and does not factor into the academic grade.

How a student behaves in class is critical to their academic success. Habits developed throughout at student's K-12 journey will carry forward into their lives beyond the public education system and can have serious implications for future success in further education and careers. Teaching, providing feedback to students, and communicating their performance regarding these important behaviors is a critical part of an educator's role in the public school system. However, including these behaviors in a student's academic grade misrepresents and distorts their performance and understanding of academic standards.

Measuring a student's behavior has traditionally been a subjective act at best. Individual classrooms have individual expectations, and varying interpretations of what is acceptable or unacceptable are prevalent throughout a school system. As a result, including behavior in an academic grade has resulted in inaccuracies, both inflated and deflated grades, and a lack of clarity regarding what a student's grade really means in terms of their understanding of grade-level standards and academic expectations. Separating a student's academic grade from a report containing information about his or her behavior will result in understanding, with increased precision, of both his/her behavior and his/her academic learning.

In order to determine a student's academic grade, his or her growth and achievements will be reported in relation to expected learning outcomes using clearly defined levels of performance aligned to grade level/course standards. Student behaviors will be reported and communicated to parents and students separately. The behaviors that will be reported using the UCSD "Building a Better U" rubrics are:
- Interaction with Peers
- Interaction with Adults
- Work Habits
- Personal Responsibility for Learning

Tracking and reporting these behaviors separately will enable teachers to provide valuable feedback to both parents and students regarding students' performance in these areas and how to continually improve both academically and behaviorally.

Building a Better U - INTERACTION WITH PEERS				
Grades	**K-2**	**3-5**	**6-8**	**9-12**
3	Uses kind words and chooses appropriate actions with peers in a variety of settings and situations	Uses kind words and chooses appropriate actions with peers in a variety of settings and situations	Acts in a way that recognizes the needs and feelings of peers in a variety of settings and situations	Acts in a way that recognizes the needs and feelings of peers in a variety of settings and situations
	Listens and accepts others' differences and ideas	Listens and accepts others' differences and ideas	Respectfully considers and responds to multiple opinions and points of view	Respectfully considers and responds to multiple opinions and points of view
	Takes responsibility for personal actions and words with peers	Takes responsibility for personal actions and words with peers	Resolves conflict appropriately	Resolves conflict appropriately
	Collaboratively works with others in a variety of settings.	Collaboratively works with others in a variety of settings.	Collaboratively works with others in a variety of settings.	Collaboratively works with others in a variety of settings.
2	Uses kind words and chooses appropriate actions with some peers in preferred settings and situations	Uses kind words and chooses appropriate actions with some peers in preferred settings and situations	Acts in a way that recognizes the needs and feelings of selected peers in preferred settings and situations	Acts in a way that recognizes the needs and feelings of selected peers in preferred settings and situations
	Listens and accepts differences and ideas of selected peers	Listens and accepts differences and ideas of selected peers	Respectfully considers and responds to opinions and points of view of selected peers	Respectfully considers and responds to opinions and points of view of selected peers
	Takes limited responsibility for personal actions and words with peers	Takes limited responsibility for personal actions and words with peers	Responds to coaching and support in order to resolve conflict with peers appropriately	Responds to coaching and support in order to resolve conflict with peers appropriately
	Collaboratively works with certain peers in preferred settings	Collaboratively works with certain peers in preferred settings	Collaboratively works with certain peers in preferred settings	Collaboratively works with certain peers in preferred settings
1	Does not use kind words and appropriate actions with peers yet	Does not use kind words and appropriate actions with peers yet	Does not act in a way that recognizes the needs and feelings of peers yet	Does not act in a way that recognizes the needs and feelings of peers yet
	Does not listen and accept others' differences and ideas yet	Does not listen and accept others' differences and ideas yet	Does not respectfully consider and respond to opinions and points of view of others yet	Does not respectfully consider and respond to opinions and points of view of others yet
	Does not take responsibility for personal actions and words with peers yet	Does not take responsibility for personal actions and words with peers yet	Does not resolve conflict appropriately yet	Does not resolve conflict appropriately yet

Last Update August 2022

	Does not collaboratively work with peers yet	Does not collaboratively work with peers yet	Does not collaboratively work with peers yet	Does not collaboratively work with peers yet

Building a Better U - INTERACTION WITH ADULTS

Grades	K-2	3-5	6-8	9-12
3	Uses kind words and chooses appropriate actions with adults in a variety of settings and situations	Uses kind words and chooses appropriate actions with adults in a variety of settings and situations	Acts in a way that recognizes the needs and feelings of adults in a variety of settings and situations	Acts in a way that recognizes the needs and feelings of adults in a variety of settings and situations
	Listens to and follows directions the first time	Listens to and follows directions the first time	Listens to and follows directions the first time	Listens to and follows directions the first time
	Takes responsibility for personal actions and words with adults	Takes responsibility for personal actions and words with adults	Resolves conflict with adults appropriately	Resolves conflict with adults appropriately
	Works together with adults to find a solution that fits the problem	Works together with adults to find a solution that fits the problem	Proactively communicates with adults to advocate for oneself	Proactively communicates with adults to advocate for oneself
2	Uses kind words and chooses appropriate actions with some adults in preferred settings and situations	Uses kind words and chooses appropriate actions with some adults in preferred settings and situations	Acts in a way that recognizes the needs and feelings of selected adults in preferred settings and situations	Acts in a way that recognizes the needs and feelings of selected adults in preferred settings and situations
	Listens to and follows directions with reminders and/or support	Listens to and follows directions with reminders and/or support	Listens to and follows directions with reminders and/or support	Listens to and follows directions with reminders and/or support
	Takes limited responsibility for personal actions and words with adults	Takes limited responsibility for personal actions and words with adults	Responds to coaching and support in order to resolve conflict with adults appropriately	Responds to coaching and support in order to resolve conflict with adults appropriately
	Willing to work together with some adults to find a solution that fits the problem	Willing to work together with some adults to find a solution that fits the problem	With coaching and support, communicates with adults to advocate for oneself	With coaching and support, communicates with adults to advocate for oneself
1	Does not use kind words and appropriate actions when interacting with adults yet	Does not use kind words and appropriate actions when interacting with adults yet	Does not act in a way that recognizes the needs and feelings of adults yet	Does not act in a way that recognizes the needs and feelings of adults yet
	Does not listen to or follow directions yet	Does not listen to or follow directions yet	Does not listen to or follow directions yet	Does not listen to or follow directions yet
	Does not take responsibility for personal actions and words with adults yet	Does not take responsibility for personal actions and words with adults yet	Does not resolve conflict with adults appropriately yet	Does not resolve conflict with adults appropriately yet

	Does not engage in problem solving with adults yet	Does not engage in problem solving with adults yet	Does not advocate for oneself yet	Does not advocate for oneself yet

Building a Better U - WORK HABITS				
Grades	K-2	3-5	6-8	9-12
3	Stays on task during classroom activities and instruction	Stays on task during classroom activities and instruction	Uses time appropriately and effectively	Uses time appropriately and effectively
	Gets prepared in a timely manner and stays organized	Gets prepared in a timely manner and stays organized	Arrives on time, prepared for class every day	Arrives on time, prepared for class every day
	Completes quality work in a timely manner	Completes quality work in a timely manner	Completes quality work in a timely manner	Completes quality work in a timely manner
	Uses and cares for materials appropriately, including technology	Uses and cares for materials appropriately, including technology	Uses and cares for materials appropriately, including technology	Uses and cares for materials appropriately, including technology
2	Needs frequent reminders to remain on task during classroom activities or instruction	Needs frequent reminders to remain on task during classroom activities or instruction	Needs frequent reminders to use time effectively	Needs frequent reminders to use time effectively
	Takes extra time to transition and/or needs extra support to stay organized	Takes extra time to transition and/or needs extra support to stay organized	Takes extra time to transition between classes and needs extra support to stay organized	Usually arrives on time, but is occasionally tardy
				Usually prepared for class
	Work quality and completion requires additional reminders and time	Work quality and completion requires additional reminders and time	Work quality and completion requires additional reminders and time provided outside the initial work time	Work quality and completion requires additional reminders and time provided outside the initial work time
	Requires reminders and modeling to use materials and technology appropriately and safely	Requires reminders and modeling to use materials and technology appropriately and safely	Requires reminders and modeling to use materials and technology appropriately and safely	Requires reminders and modeling to use materials and technology appropriately and safely
1	Off task and distracting to others during work time	Off task and distracting to others during work time	Does not use time effectively yet	Does not use time effectively yet
	Is not prepared or organized yet	Is not prepared or organized yet	Does not transition between classes efficiently and stay organized yet	Rarely arrives on time, prepared for class

Last Update August 2022

	Does not complete quality work with reminders, supports, and extended time yet	Does not complete quality work with reminders, supports, and extended time yet	Does not complete quality work with reminders, supports, and extended time yet	Does not complete quality work with reminders, supports, and extended time yet
	Does not use materials and technology appropriately and safely yet	Does not use materials and technology appropriately and safely yet	Does not use materials and technology appropriately and safely yet	Does not use materials and technology appropriately and safely yet

Building a Better U - PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR LEARNING				
Grades	K-2	3-5	6-8	9-12
3	Positively contributes to the classroom and building atmosphere	Positively contributes to the classroom and building atmosphere	Positively contributes to the classroom and building atmosphere	Positively contributes to the classroom and building atmosphere
	Accepts and utilizes feedback to set and work toward personal learning goals	Accepts and utilizes feedback to set and work toward personal learning goals	Seeks and utilizes feedback for personal reflection and academic growth toward goals	Seeks and utilizes feedback for personal reflection and academic growth toward goals
	Embraces opportunities to learn and try new things	Embraces opportunities to learn and try new things	Embraces additional opportunities to improve learning	Embraces additional opportunities to improve learning
	Perseveres when presented with a challenge	Perseveres when presented with a challenge	Perseveres when presented with a challenge	Perseveres when presented with a challenge
2	Responds to coaching and support to positively contribute to the classroom and building atmosphere	Responds to coaching and support to positively contribute to the classroom and building atmosphere	Responds to coaching and support to positively contribute to the classroom and building atmosphere	Responds to coaching and support to positively contribute to the classroom and building atmosphere
	Selectively accepts redirection and feedback to work toward personal learning goals	Selectively accepts redirection and feedback to work toward personal learning goals	Selectively seeks and utilizes feedback for personal reflection and academic growth toward goals	Selectively seeks and utilizes feedback for personal reflection and academic growth toward goals
	Hesitates or needs coaching and support to learn and try new things	Hesitates or needs coaching and support to learn and try new things	With coaching and support, takes advantage of additional opportunities to improve learning	With coaching and support, takes advantage of additional opportunities to improve learning
	Needs coaching and encouragement to persevere when presented with a challenge	Needs coaching and encouragement to persevere when presented with a challenge	Needs coaching and encouragement to persevere when presented with a challenge	Needs coaching and encouragement to persevere when presented with a challenge
1	Does not positively contribute to the classroom and building atmosphere, yet	Does not positively contribute to the classroom and building atmosphere, yet	Does not positively contribute to the classroom and building atmosphere, yet	Does not positively contribute to the classroom and building atmosphere, yet
	Does not accept redirection and feedback toward improvement yet	Does not accept redirection and feedback toward improvement yet	Does not utilize feedback for personal reflection and academic growth toward goals yet	Does not utilize feedback for personal reflection and academic growth toward goals yet

26

Unwilling to learn and try new things, yet	Unwilling to learn and try new things, yet	Does not take advantage of additional opportunities to improve learning, yet	Does not take advantage of additional opportunities to improve learning, yet
Does not follow through when presented with a challenge, yet	Does not follow through when presented with a challenge, yet	Does not follow through when presented with a challenge, yet	Does not follow through when presented with a challenge, yet

Last Update August 2022

Implications for Professional Practice

Best Practices that Support Guiding Principle #4	Practices that Should NOT be Used
Include only academic achievement in the determination of a student's mark on an assessment/assignment	Use factors such as punctuality, effort, participation, etc. in the determination of a student's mark on an assessment/assignment
Provide increasingly targeted support and feedback for learners who struggle to meet deadlines; communicate with parents to enlist their support as well	Reduce a student's academic grade for work submitted past a deadline
Apply behavioral consequences for academic dishonesty and reassess the student to determine the actual level of their understanding	Reduce a student's grade for academic dishonesty or fail to provide them with another opportunity to demonstrate what they actually know and can do
Track and report student absences and tardies and apply behavioral consequences when chronic issues arise	Reduce a student's grade for attendance issues
Keep track of missing/incomplete work; communicate with parents and students	Automatically factor in a "zero" for missing/incomplete work
Give students credit for work actually completed, according to the levels of performance described in the scales	Give students credit for effort or attempting work that does not show evidence of their understanding
Report student performance level for their behavior as defined by the UCSD Building a Better U rubrics	Include behavior in the calculation of a student's academic grade

Supporting Literature for Guiding Principle #4

Brookhart, S. M. (2011). *Grading and learning: Practices that support student achievement.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press
 Chapter 4: Designing and Grading Assessments to Reflect Student Achievement – Grade Achievement, and Handle Behavioral Issues Behaviorally

Costa, A. L. & Kallick, B. (Eds). (2009). *Habits of mind across the curriculum: Practical and creative strategies for teachers.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
 Chapter 1: Habit is a Cable
 Chapter 5: Teaching Habits of Mind
 Chapter 7: Habits of Mind as Character Education
 Chapter 20: Sustaining a Focus on the Habits of Mind

Guskey, T. R. & Jung, L. A. (2013). *Answers to essential questions about standards,*

assessments, grading, & reporting. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
Chapter 21: What Criteria Do Teachers Use in Assigning Grades?

Heflebower, T., Hoegh, J. K. & Warrick, P. (2014). *A school leader's guide to standards-based grading.* Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research.
Chapter 4: Meaningful Grades – Separating Knowledge and Behavior

O'Connor, K. (2011). *A repair kit for grading: 15 fixes for broken grades.* Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
Fix #1: Don't include student behaviors (effort, participation, adherence to class rules, etc.) in grades; include only achievement.
Fix #2: Don't reduce marks on "work" submitted late; provide support for the learner.
Fix #3: Don't give points for extra credit or use bonus points; seek only evidence that more work has resulted in a higher level of achievement.
Fix #4: Don't punish academic dishonesty with reduced grades; apply other consequences and reassess to determine actual levels of achievement.
Fix #5: Don't consider attendance in grade determination; report absences separately.
Fix #6: Don't include group scores in grades; use only individual achievement evidence.

Reeves, D. B. (2011). *Elements of grading: A guide to effective practice.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
Chapter 5: How to Improve Specificity - Behavior

Schimmer, T. (2016). *Grading from the inside out: Bringing accuracy to student assessment through a standards-based mindset.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
Chapter 7: How to Redefine Accountability
Chapter 9: How to Teach and Assess Student Attributes and Competencies

Wormeli, R. (2006). *Fair isn't always equal: Assessing and grading in the differentiated classroom.* Westervile, OH: National Middle School Association.
Chapter 8: Why Do We Grade, and What About Effort, Attendance, and Behavior?
Chapter 10: Conditions for Redoing Work for Full Credit
Chapter 11: Six Burning Grading Issues

Letter Grades – High School

Traditional letter grades (i.e. A, B, C, D, F) are a commonly understood tool that serves to aggregate vast amounts of information about student performance into a single symbol. The current letter grade system dates back to the Ivy League colleges in the early 19th century. Grades were established as a way to rank and sort students, comparing their performance to each other rather than to established criteria. Inconsistent symbols were initially used, and it wasn't until the early 20th century that high schools and colleges in the United States began using letter grades and percentages.

The movement to establish standards for learning, which grew out of the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), necessitates a change in the educational reporting system. Rather than rank and sort, a measurement system that determines student performance against established criteria (standards) is necessary to show student understanding of those standards. Further, both federal and state laws as well as multiple Supreme Court decisions, mandate that schools serve the needs of all learners and set improvement goals predicated on students achieving understanding of grade level standards.

In grades pre kindergarten through eight, students are organized into courses in a year-long format. This means students have an entire year in which to learn content and skills necessary to demonstrate an understanding of grade-level standards. Trying to aggregate multiple pieces of student learning into a single symbol (i.e. a letter grade) distorts understanding of a student's achievement. Thus, progress in grades prekindergarten through grade eight will be reported according to each individual reporting topic for a course/subject area. This means parents, teachers, and students will have a more detailed view of the student's understanding of grade level content and skills.

In many ways, high school is different from previous grades. Courses are organized into semesters, rather than a year-long format. Further, letter grades are used for multiple academic and non-academic purposes. For this reason, <u>a letter grade will continue to be used for all students in grades nine through twelve to summarize their academic achievement</u>. In the "Grading for Learning" system, students will also receive scores on individual reporting topics for each course to provide more detailed information about their understanding of grade level standards.

Standards for a course are grouped into reporting topics. Reporting topics represent a group of related standards. In the curriculum review process, teams of teachers work to understand and organize their courses' standards into reporting topics and define what levels of student understanding look like. These levels are identified in the course proficiency scales. As described in the previous sections of this handbook, teachers assign scores to individual pieces of student evidence. As more evidence accumulates, teachers can then determine their students' levels of understanding on each reporting topic.

At the end of each semester, once teachers have determined their students' levels of understanding on each reporting topic, the student information system will average these reporting topic scores together. This then becomes a student's letter grade for the course. A scale for this conversion is provided on the next page.

Conversion Scale: Reporting Topic Average to Letter Grades

Score (Reporting Topic Average)	Grade
3.5 – 4.0	A* With Honors
3.0 – 3.49	A
2.84 – 2.99	B+
2.67 – 2.83	B
2.5 – 2.66	B-
2.34 – 2.49	C+
2.17 – 2.33	C
2.0 – 2.16	C-
1.84 – 1.99	D+
1.67 – 1.83	D
1.5 – 1.66	D-
Below 1.5	F

In this system, the grade of A begins at 3.0 because a score of 3.0 indicates that a student has demonstrated understanding of all grade level content. A plus/minus system is maintained for grades B, C, and D within the larger subdivisions of scores. All reporting topics are considered equal – no reporting topic has more weight than any other one.

In order to see how this conversion from individual Reporting Topic scores to a letter grade happens, consider the following for Science (see page 11 for more information on scoring reporting topics using student evidence of learning):

Class Name: Science I

Reporting Topic	Evidence #1	Evidence #2	Evidence #3	Final Reporting Topic Score
Physical Science: Chemical Reactions	2.5	2.5	3.0	**3.0**
Physical Science: Energy Definitions	1.5	2.5	2.5	**2.5**
Life Science: Natural Selection	3.0	2.5	3.0	**3.0**
Life Science: Adaptation	2.0	2.0	2.0	**2.0**
Earth Science: Natural Resources	2.5	2.5	3.0	**3.0**
Engineering: Defining Problems	1.5	2.0	2.0	**2.0**
				Average: 2.58

The average of the six reporting topics taught and assessed during the first semester is: __**2.58**__.
The student's grade for Science I is: _____**B -**_____. This student is meeting grade level standards in some areas (Chemical Reactions, Natural Selection, Natural Resources), but not in others (Energy Definitions, Adaptation, Defining Problems).

Letter grades will appear with the individual reporting topics on a student's report card in grades nine through twelve. Only a student's letter grades will appear on their transcript at this time. Letter grades will enable students to continue to have a Grade Point Average. The points for calculation of letter grades DO NOT change, and Power Teacher will continue to calculate GPA for you (see below):

GPA Points	Grade
4.0	A*
4.0	A
3.33	B+
3.0	B
2.67	B-
2.33	C+
2.0	C
1.67	C-
1.33	D+
1.0	D
.67	D-
0	F

Sample Student GPA Calculation

9th Grade English	B-
9th Grade Math	B+
9th Grade Science	B-
9th Grade Social Studies	A
Music	A*
Art	C+
PE	C+
Student's GPA	3.05

Supporting Literature

Burke, K. (2010). *Balanced assessment: From formative to summative.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
    Chapter 3: Common Assessments: A Community of Assessors
    Chapter 8: Summative Assessment and Evaluation: The Last Judgment

Guskey, T. R. & Jung, L. A. (2013). *Answers to essential questions about standards, assessments, grading, & reporting.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
    Part II: Assessments

Lassahn, Nicole. "History of Grading Systems" classroom.synonym.com, https://classroom.synonym.com/history-grading-systems-5103640.html. 6 August 2019.

Schimmer, T. (2016). *Grading from the inside out: Bringing accuracy to student assessment through a standards-based mindset.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
    Chapter 6: How to Repurpose Homework
    Chapter 8: How to Use Levels of Proficiency

Conclusion

Grading and reporting student learning has been a cornerstone of educational practice since its inception. Grades communicate information about student learning and progress, and are an almost universal expectation of students, teachers, parents, other educational institutions, and employers. It is the moral imperative of educators to ensure grades communicate the right information about student learning. Grading for Learning will ensure a student's grades accurately and precisely represent understanding of academic standards. These practices will move the Urbandale Community School District closer to achieving its mission of "Teaching All, Reaching All."

Additional Supporting Literature

Brookhart, S. M. (2011). Starting the conversation about grading. *Educational Leadership, 69* (3), 10-14.

Des Moines Public Schools (2014). *DMPS secondary grading practices: Teacher handbook.* Des Moines, IA.

Guskey, T. R. (2004). Are zeros your ultimate weapon? *Principal Leadership, November 2004,* 31-35.

Jones Miller, J. (2013). A better grading system: Standards-based, student-centered assessment. *English Journal, 103.1* (2013), 111-118.

Kotter, J. P. (2007). Leading change: Why transformation efforts fail. *Harvard Business Review, January 2007,* 2-10.

Lahey, J. (2014). Letter grades deserve an 'F'. *The Atlantic, March 2014,* 1-7.

Marzano, R. J. Heflebower, T. (2011). Grades that show what students know: Best practices suggest four ways to make the most of standards-based grading and reporting. *Educational Leadership, 69* (3)*,* 34-39.

Reeves, D. B. (2008). Leading to change: Effective grading practices. *Educational Leadership, 65* (5), 85-87.

Reeves, D. B. (2004). The case against the zero. *Phi Delta Kappan, 86* (4)*,* 324-325.

Townsley, M. (2013). Redesigning grading – districtwide. *Educational Leadership, December 2013/January 2014,* 68-71.

Appendix A: UCSD Curriculum Review Process

Step in Curriculum Review Process	Expected Outcome
Define the "Why"	Common understanding of the purpose and intended outcomes of curriculum review Operational definitions for curriculum and standards
Create the Vision	Articulated current state and desired state Vision for the department/curricular area
Study Standards	Common understanding of standards
Unpack Standards	Common understanding of the content and depth of knowledge (student performance level) expected from each standard
Write Student-Friendly Learning Targets	Develop student-friendly statements describing what students should know and be able to do in order to demonstrate that they have learned the standards
Get School Board Approval	Approved standards and learning targets for a course
Create and/or Align Reporting Topics	Reporting Topics for a set of standards that organize standards into discrete descriptors that are able to be reported to parents
Write Proficiency Descriptors	Defined levels of student performance within each reporting topic
Write Common Summative Assessments	Common summative assessments that provide evidence of student proficiency in a reporting topic.
Evaluate and Select Instructional Resources	Selection and purchase or resources to support instruction and implementation of standards
Write Units of Study	Organization of standards in teachable chunks around a common concept or theme; determine reporting topics to assess during the unit and level of performance expected as a result of instruction

Appendix B: Glossary of Terms

Term/Concept	Operational Definition
Aligned/Alignment	Alignment means that an assessment item matches both the content of the standard and the level of student performance expected by the standard. For example, if a standard requires students to "identify" something, a multiple choice question may be appropriate. However, if a standard asks students to "explain" something, an assessment question would need to be open-ended to allow students to express their thinking. Alignment also refers to the instruction students receive. Instructional activities and strategies should allow for full exploration of the content of the standard and opportunities to demonstrate the level of performance the standard expects of students.
Approaching Grade Level Standard	If a student is approaching a grade level standard, they have independently demonstrated (without assistance, or in the case of special needs students, with IEP/504 accommodations) understanding of simpler information and skills taught in class and expected in the grade level. For example, because standards describe end-of-year expectations, teachers typically scaffold instruction to start with foundational concepts in order to build background knowledge for students as they progress throughout the year. Success with these foundational concepts would indicate a student is approaching a grade level standard in terms of their understanding. If a student is still approaching a grade level standard at the end of the year, this would indicate they have not yet mastered the key concepts, processes, and skills defined by grade level standards.
Assessment: Common Formative Assessment	Common Formative Assessments (CFAs) are written by professional learning community (PLC) teams. CFAs are intended to provide information to teachers and students about what students know and are able to do with respect to standards at this time. CFAs can be used as evidence of student proficiency (if they have mastered the intended standards) or to alter instruction (if students have not yet mastered the intended standards).
Assessment: Common Summative Assessment	Common Summative Assessments (CSAs) are written by PLC teams. CSAs are intended to provide information to teachers and students about what students know and are able to do with respect to standards after all instruction has taken place. CSAs are intended to be used as evidence of a student's proficiency level with respect to the standards that were taught.

Term/Concept	Operational Definition
Beginning to Learn Grade Level Standard	If a student is beginning to learn a grade level standard this is an indication of gaps in their knowledge and skills regarding standards being taught. Students will typically need frequent assistance or, in the case of students with special needs, additional assistance beyond what is specified in an IEP or 504 plan. Students at this level are not able to independently (or with appropriate IEP or 504 accommodations) able to show evidence of learning at the approaching grade level standard level of proficiency on assessments.
Collaboratively Developed	Collaboratively developed instruction and assessments involve the work of teachers of the same class and/or content. Each member of a PLC team contributes to collaboratively developed assessments and instruction, and each member of the PLC team agrees to adhere to what has been developed.
Content Category	Various content areas have different organizational structures. Math organizes their standards into "Domains" and literacy is organized into "Strands." Rather than operate with different terms for the same idea, these have been renamed content categories in the UCSD Curriculum Review Process.
Evidence	Evidence are artifacts that demonstrate a student's understanding of standards as articulated in the proficiency scale.
Exceeding Grade Level Standard	If a student is exceeding a grade level standard, they have consistently and independently (without assistance, or in the case of students with special needs, with IEP/504 accommodations) demonstrated understanding of content, concepts, and skills that go beyond what was explicitly taught in class. This could mean applying and transferring information to new and unfamiliar contexts or understanding information above current grade-level standards.
Grade	A grade is a summative judgment of a student's performance with respect to the standards being taught and assessed. Grades are determined by comparing the level of performance (beginning, approaching, meeting, or exceeding) on individual pieces of evidence aligned to reporting topics. By looking at this body of evidence, teachers can then determine what the final grade should be with respect to the reporting topic. At the high school level, grades on individual reporting topics are averaged into a final letter grade. This is possible because all reporting topics carry equal weight in the curriculum.

Term/Concept	Operational Definition
Guiding Principles for Grading	The Guiding Principles for grading were collaboratively developed by the Grading Practices team. They represent the philosophical approach to grading that is expected in all UCSD classrooms.
Homework	Homework is an opportunity for students to practice skills and develop their learning about content represented in standards. These opportunities can be individual or collaborative, and should take place after instruction. As it is practice, homework does not count as evidence of a student's understanding of standards.
Inter-rater Reliability	Inter-rater reliability refers to the likelihood that two teachers will independently interpret evidence of student learning in the same way with respect to a student's level of performance. For example, if two teachers examined the same assessment independently and deemed the student "meeting grade level standard" this would be an example of high inter-rater reliability on that assessment. However, if one teacher deemed a student "meeting grade level standard" and another teacher deemed the same piece of evidence as "approaching grade level standard" then the inter-rater reliability would be low.
Learning Target	A learning target is a student-friendly description of what they should know and be able to do with respect to a standard.
Mark	A mark is the judgment of a student's performance with respect to the standard being taught and assessed on a single piece of evidence. For example, if a teacher administered three separate assessments (pieces of evidence) for a particular standard, the student would have three marks to note their achievement. By looking at and collectively considering the marks on each piece of evidence for a particular reporting topic, a teacher can determine a student's grade.
Meeting Grade Level Standard	If a student is meeting a grade level standard, they have consistently and independently (without assistance or, in the case of special needs students, with IEP/504 accommodations) demonstrated understanding of all content and skills that were taught and represent grade-level standards and expectations. As standards represent year-end or end-of-course targets, the timeline for meeting these targets is by the end of the year/course.

Term/Concept	Operational Definition
Professional Learning Community (PLC)	A professional learning community is comprised of teachers of the same content and/or course. The purpose of a PLC is to collaborate around these four questions to ensure consistent expectations and high quality, responsive instructional practices: 1. What do we want our students to know and be able to do (expectations for learning)? 2. How are we going to know if and when our students can do these things (assessment)? 3. What will we do if students don't understand (during and after instruction)? 4. What will we do if students already understand (before and during instruction)?
Proficient	To be proficient, a student must demonstrate understanding of the learning expectations (both content and depth of knowledge/performance expectations).
Proficiency Descriptor	Proficiency descriptors are short statements that describe what it means to be proficient at various levels of understanding. For example, each reporting topic has four levels of proficiency: beginning, approaching, meeting, and exceeding expectations. Expectations for grade-level proficiency are described at the "meeting expectations" level.
Proficiency Scale	A proficiency scale is the collection of proficiency descriptors for a reporting topic.
Reliable/Reliability	Reliability is a term used to describe the extent to which an assessment is consistent. It shouldn't matter what time of the day or day of the week an assessment is given to a student, it should give consistent results. Reliability within an assessment means that if five items are designed to assess student understanding of a particular concept, a student's performance on one item should be very similar to the other four items (assuming reliability among the items is high). Reliability in grading means that if two students perform at the same level, they will have the same grade.
Report Card	A report card is a report of progress of student learning for parents/guardians. Report cards summarize student learning for a trimester (elementary) and quarter (secondary). At the high school level, report cards at the semester breaks in January and May indicate final understanding of standards and learning targets (organized by reporting topics) for a course. Grades on semester report cards are used to calculate a student's grade point average at the high school level only.

39

Term/Concept	Operational Definition
Reporting Topic	A reporting topic consists of clusters of related standards. These clusters of related standards are categorized into a concept that can be assessed and reported. Reporting topics are listed on report cards to provide more detail regarding student achievement of standards and learning targets. By reporting learning in this way, it is easier for students, parents, and teachers to see areas in which students are adequately progressing and areas in which they are excelling or struggling. At the high school level, grades on individual reporting topics are averaged into a final letter grade. This is possible because all reporting topics carry equal weight in the curriculum.
Standards	Standards are statements that describe what students should learn with respect to particular programs of study. Standards are adopted at the state level and are required to be taught in accredited public schools throughout the state. Standards are developed collaboratively, and include both content and pedagogical experts. Standards are reviewed periodically.
Standardization	Standardization refers to the practice of making everything the same/consistent. In some cases, this is good. Standardizing grading practices, for example, ensures students performing at similar levels are given the same grade for their learning. In some cases, standardization is not good. Standardizing instruction, making everyone do the exact same thing on the exact same day, is not responsive to student needs. The goal of reforming grading practices is to standardize those things that make assessment and reporting of student learning more fair, accurate, specific and timely. The goal of grading practices reform is NOT to standardize educational practices like instruction.
Units of Study	Units of study refer to the organization of assessment and instruction of standards and learning expectations into coherent and manageable chunks. Units are typically organized around a particular topic, concept, or theme. Units involve cycles of learning that include goal setting, instruction, assessment, and feedback.
Unpacking Standards	Unpacking standards refers to the process of breaking standards down for the purpose of creating common understanding of what the standard is asking students to know and be able to do. Teacher teams collaboratively study the nouns (content) and verbs (level of student performance expected), breaking down these terms into clear and consistent language that is understood by all.

Term/Concept	Operational Definition
Valid/Validity	Validity refers to the extent to which an assessment accurately measures what it is supposed to measure. This is the extent to which an assessment accurately measures the standards and learning targets that are intended. The process of unpacking standards helps increase validity as common understanding among teachers is built.