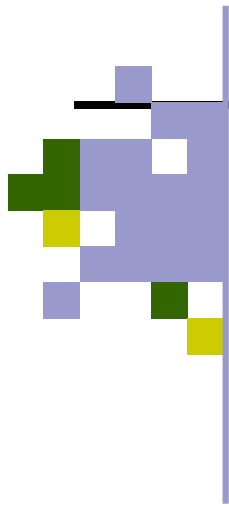


**Council Bluffs**  
Community School District  
*...Where Dreams Begin!*

# **Grading Practices Resource Manual**

## **2011-2012**

***The mission of the Council Bluffs Community School District is to guarantee every student graduates with the knowledge, skills and character to become a responsible citizen and succeed in a changing world by creating a leading edge, inclusive educational system which provides challenging expectations, diverse experiences, engaging curriculum, and innovative teaching within a collaborative, caring community.***



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A special thank you to the following individuals who have served on the District  
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## Grading and Reporting Guidelines

### Council Bluffs Community School District

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#### Philosophy:

The Council Bluffs School District believes that grades reflect and communicate to students, parents, teachers, and postsecondary schools student progress on district learning targets. As a result of a fair and consistent grading process, students will be able to evaluate their learning and set personal goals to attain the district learning targets and communicate achievement status to interested stakeholders.

#### Core Beliefs:

- A wide variety of quality assessments determine grades. Quality assessments meet rigorous design criteria (e.g. clear targets, clear purpose, appropriate match of target and method and lack of bias and distortion) and help communicate progress on learning targets. Appropriate tools to record and maintain evidence of achievement as well as evidence of work habits/ life skills are critical to the process.
- Students must be involved in the assessment and grading process throughout the learning cycle. Students will understand the assessment process and how to communicate their achievement and progress.
- Learning occurs at different times and in different ways for students. Students need multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery.

**Guideline #1 (grading scale):** A consistent interval grading scale will be used.

Clarification: A fair and consistent calculation that reflects student learning is critical to student success. Grades must be entered as whole numbers or .5. For example, a score of 3 would be entered rather than 3.1; 2.5 would be entered rather than 2.3.

The scale is as follows:

A = 4 mastery (Student knows it and the teacher knows student knows it)

B = 3 (Student knows most of it)

C = 2 (Student knows some of it)

D = 1 (Student is working on knowing it)

F = .5 (Student has limited knowledge of concepts)

F = 0 (No attempt)

**Trimester Grades**

Final Score	Final Grade
3.50-4.00	A
2.50-3.49	B
1.50-2.49	C
.51-1.49	D
0-.50	F

**Guideline #2 (behavior):** Letter grades, derived from the 4-point scale, will be based solely on achievement of course/grade level standards. Student attendance, effort, ability, engagement, improvement, attitude, and other behaviors will be reported separately from achievement using Council Bluffs Community Schools Employability Skills Rubric.

Clarification: Scores using the employability scale will be reported holistically ~~quarterly~~ **during progress reporting windows and at the end of each trimester** for all students; however, the frequency of reporting this information is based on individual student needs or the content of the class. Scores derived from the Employability Skills Rubric will not be included in students' GPA.

Nonacademic factors such as behavior, attendance, and effort are not incorporated into academic grades. Participation points *may* be used if that is the actual skill that is being taught. For example, if a student is performing in a musical group or needs to participate in a team sport in order to demonstrate understanding of concepts being taught.

**Guideline #3 (weighting):** Grades will be based on student achievement in categories designated as **performance**.

Clarification: No less than 70% of the final student grade will be based on students' **demonstrating** knowledge and understanding of concepts (i.e. assessments, performance tasks, projects, *major* assignments). This category is designated as **PERFORMANCE** and includes both formative and summative assessments. Examples include papers, unit exams, finals, and projects. Students need to demonstrate that they understand the power grade/course level expectations by earning a grade of D or higher.

No more than 30% of the final grade will be based on **building** knowledge (i.e., independent practice on daily work, reviews or warm-ups, etc.). This category is designated as **PRACTICE**.

**Guideline #4 (redo and late work):** All work designated as performance (70%) is to be completed and students will be given reasonable opportunities to complete learning on practice (30%) tasks.

Clarification:

**LATE WORK**

**Practice:** Students will have an opportunity to complete lesson practice and activities (30% of grade). Assignments not completed within a reasonable timeframe designated by the teacher will be converted to a 0.

**Performance:** Students are expected to complete all learning designated as **performance** (account for 70% of grade). All work needs to be completed within the timeframes identified by the teacher. Students who do not complete performance assignments on time will have five student contact days to turn in late work **without lowering their grade one grade**. After the five days if work is not turned in students will be assigned learning recovery designed by the teacher, building team, and/or department to help them complete assignments designated as performance. Learning

recovery may occur before, during, or after school. Building learning recovery plans will need to be documented at all three levels (teacher, team, and building). ~~Students who choose not to attend learning recovery opportunities may have their grade reduced up to, but no more than 1 point.~~ All performances are to be passed for the student to pass the class. Based upon student need teachers may accept late work without penalty, pending teacher determination of the circumstances (e.g. prolonged illness etc.).

Previously assigned work that has not been turned in prior to last ten days of the trimester will not be accepted unless special circumstances or previously agreed upon by teacher and student. No late work will be accepted past the last day of the trimester unless previously agreed upon by the teacher and the student.

### **REDO**

Assignments for practice (30%) are not eligible to be redone unless a teacher determines a redo on practice is necessary based upon student need.

Students must demonstrate ~~mastery~~ understanding of the power grade level/course level expectations. Students may demonstrate ~~mastery (letter grade of D)~~ understanding in multiple ways and over multiple opportunities. In order to retake/redo performance assignment students must demonstrate that they have reviewed/reworked previous learning.

Students may redo work designated as performance one time after earning a passing grade ~~after demonstrating~~ if they demonstrate that they have reviewed/ reworked previous learning.

**Guideline #5 (accommodations):** Accommodations and modifications are provided to students with special needs.

A special needs student should not receive a lower grade because the appropriate accommodation and modifications of the learning expectations were made. Appropriate accommodations and modifications should be documented in the IEP.

**Guideline #6 (Advanced Courses, HS ONLY):** The high school grade assigned to Dual Credit and AP courses will be adjusted at the end of each trimester.

The high school grade assigned to Dual Credit and AP courses will be adjusted at the end of each trimester. If passing, the final high school grade assigned to dual credit and AP courses will be raised one letter grade. If the student is receiving an A for the AP/DC course, the HS grade will be raised to 4.5.

## Grading Practices Research Summary

**Guideline #1 (grading scale):** A consistent interval grading scale will be used.

Clarification: A fair and consistent calculation that reflects student learning is critical to student success. Grades must be entered as whole numbers or .5. For example a score of 3 would be entered rather than 3.1; 2.5 would be entered rather than 2.3.

The scale is as follows:

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### Trimester Grades

Final Score	Final Grade
3.50-4.00	A
2.50-3.49	B
1.50-2.49	C
.51-1.49	D
0-.50	F

**Supporting Research:** Grades must be accurate to be useful. The use of a grading scale that is unequal, such as the 100-point scale, distorts the final grade as a true indicator of mastery (Wormeli, 2006). Mathematically and ethically this is unacceptable.

The smaller scale we use, the higher the inter-rater reliability. This means an A in Teacher X's class represents the same level of mastery as an A in Teacher Y's class across the hall or across the district. In order for this to happen, very clear and mutually agreed-on descriptors must be used. When an agreed upon grading scale is used, more consistent grading occurs. Smaller scales make individual distortions less likely and make grading practices more consistent (Wormeli, 2006).

**Rationale:** Adjusting the grading scale so it is ethically justifiable, so that each grade has an appropriate amount of influence on the students' summative evaluation is necessary so the grade can be used in decision-making. If grades are to be accurate—and they have to be accurate to provide feedback, document progress, and inform our instructional decisions—then an equal interval scale is a necessity.

#### Best Practice Examples:

- To document student and teacher progress
- To provide feedback to the student and family and the teacher
- To inform instructional decisions

#### Ineffective Examples :

- Using the 4 point scale to calculate percentages
- Not using feedback to plan instruction
- Using zeros that are not on an equal interval scale

**Activity for Illustrative Purposes:**

Test Scores	Unfair System	Fair System
0/0,100/4, 100/ 4,100/4,100/4, 100/4	83 C	3.3 A

**Guideline #2 (behavior):** Letter grades, derived from the 4-point scale, will be based solely on achievement of course/grade level standards. Student attendance, effort, ability, engagement, improvement, attitude, and other behaviors will be reported separately from achievement using Council Bluffs Community Schools Employability Skills Rubric.

Clarification: Scores using the employability scale will be reported holistically ~~quarterly~~ **during progress reporting windows and at the end of each trimester** for all students; however, the frequency of reporting this information is based on individual student needs or the content of the class. Scores derived from the Employability Skills Scale will not be included in students' GPA.

Nonacademic factors such as behavior, attendance, and effort are not incorporated into academic grades. Participation points *may* be used if that is the actual skill that is being taught. For example, if a student is performing in a musical group or needs to participate in a team sport in order to demonstrate understanding of concepts being taught.

**Supporting Research:** If we incorporate behavior, attendance and effort into the grade, we run afoul of our intent to keep grades as accurate indicators of mastery. Imagine this feedback to a parent: "Your son's grade, Mrs. Wilson, indicates what he knows and is able to do, in addition to all the days he was polite to others and came to class, participated in group discussions, did not steal others' property, maintained an organized notebook, and brought his pencil to class." (Wormeli, 2006)

Many school subjects lend themselves to evaluating a student's participation: drama, physical education, band, orchestra, chorus, speech, public speaking, among others. In these subjects and all others, however, we must consider whether students' participation is a technique used to learn the standards. If participation is an avenue a teacher travels with students in order to arrive at mastery, then it is inappropriate to grade. Mastery refers only to what students know and are able to do regarding the standards, not the routes we take to get there.

If participation is the actual skill being taught, then it's appropriate to grade it because it is the mastery we're seeking. Participation grades should reflect mastery of the skill, not the fact that a student attempted the skill. For example, having students receive participation points for mastering the vocal intonation for multi rhythmic tunes based upon a rubric is what a master music teacher does. Giving points for attempting to sing in class is what a novice music teacher might do.

Grading effort and behavior is a slippery, subjective slope. Yes, we can chart work habits in order to provide feedback and develop positive behaviors as true habits, but we do not have an accurate yardstick for effort. Comparing some students who went all out on a project with those who did just the bare minimum to satisfy the requirements is a very subjective call. One

student's outstanding effort is another student's quickly thrown together, scribbled page. Declaring the extent and impact of students' efforts with authority can be difficult to defend.

Behavior is never a part of an academic grade. Although we teach behavior the same as we teach academics, the two should never be averaged together as a grade. For example; Albert Einstein was considered by his teachers as having difficulty in focusing on the task at hand and was unable to stay on topic, in fact he most likely would have been labeled as ADD by today's standards for diagnosis. Yet to have graded him as mediocre or average (had his behavior grades been averaged with his academics) would belie his genius. Low grades (that may factor in behavior, participation, effort and attendance) actually are a disincentive. A surprise to some: "Low grades push students farther from our course, they don't motivate students. Recording a D on a student's paper won't light a fire under that student to buckle down and study harder. It actually distances the student further from us and the curriculum, requiring us to build an emotional bridge to bring him or her back to the same level of investment prior to receiving the grade." Guskey and others have documented this effect (Guskey and Bailey, 2001).

**Rationale:** A grade represents a clear and accurate indicator of what a student knows and is able to do---mastery. With grades, we document the progress of students and our teaching, we provide feedback to students and their parents, and we make instructional decisions regarding the students.

**Best Practice Examples:**

- Example: Having students receive participation points for mastering the vocal intonation for multi rhythmic tunes based upon a rubric is what a master music teacher does.
- Another example: Teaching Einstein appropriate behavior and documenting it separately in the comments section of the report card is what an expert teacher would do. Parents would be called to help reinforce on task behavior, etc

**Ineffective Examples:**

- To motivate students with participation points
- To punish students academically for misbehaving instead of re-teaching the skill or procedure
- To sort students based upon effort or attendance
- Example: Giving points for attempting to sing in class is what a novice music teacher might do.
- Another example: Averaging Einstein's behavior with his academic grade to give him a C is what an inexperienced teacher may do.

**Activity for Illustrative Purposes:** Consider this--would we ever punish a child who could not read? No, we would teach and reteach that student the fundamental reading skills until it was mastered. So if our intent is to teach behavior expectations, then much like we would not punish for an inability to read, we would not grade academically for an inability to behave. Behavior is not a reflection of academic skills.



**Guideline #3 (weighting):** Grades will be based on student achievement in categories designated as **performance**.

Clarification: No less than 70% of the final student grade will be based on students' **demonstrating** knowledge and understanding of concepts (i.e. assessments, performance tasks, projects, *major* assignments). This category is designated as **PERFORMANCE** and includes both formative and summative assessments. Examples include papers, unit exams, finals, and projects. Students need to demonstrate that they understand the power grade/course level expectations by earning a grade of D or higher.

No more than 30% of the final grade will be based on **building** knowledge (i.e., independent practice on daily work, reviews or warm-ups, etc.). This category is designated as **PRACTICE**.

**Supporting Research:** If we grade students' practice on their steps in coming to know a concept, the final grade is inaccurate. Why? Because it does not measure the final knowledge or skill, rather it measures practice. It represents what the child knows and is able to do, as well as all the practice attempts and immature understanding of concepts along the way.

**Rationale:** If we grade students' practice on their steps in coming to know a concept, the final grade is inaccurate. Why? Because it does not measure the final knowledge or skill, rather it measures practice. For example, would you want to jump out of a plane with a parachute packed by a B grade worker who received high grades during the initial practice but never managed to complete the final packaged parachute test in the end? Or would you prefer to jump out of the plane, with the C parachute worker who initially struggled with the folds and ties but in the final test had the best packed parachute in the class. Of course, you would pick the C student's parachute to jump out of the plane. The most important response to a student's homework assignment is descriptive feedback, not grades, and grades in general without descriptive feedback are poor forms of feedback. (Marzano, 2006) Some assignments that are sent home are not for practice; rather they are formative assessments (working daily on a piece of music to improve clarinet skills) or summative assessments (a final research project on the Civil War).

**Best Practice Example:** The high performing teacher introduces a new topic in class; students work together to familiarize themselves with the topic, at the end of class the teacher assigns practice homework. When the students return to class the homework assignment is discussed as a way for the teacher to gauge understanding and make decisions about how the class will proceed with the topic. Students receive either verbal or written descriptive feedback on the homework.

**Ineffective Example:** The low performing teacher introduces a new topic in class but does not build in guided practice time to check for mastery or re-teach what is needed. The teacher gives an assignment over the new material at the end of the block that is worth 100 points. When the students return to class they hand the assignment in and the teacher moves on to the next topic.

**Guideline #4 (redo and late work):** All work designated as performance (70%) is to be completed and students will be given reasonable opportunities to complete learning on practice (30%) tasks.

Clarification:

#### **LATE WORK**

**Practice:** Students will have an opportunity to complete lesson practice and activities (30% of grade). Assignments not completed within a reasonable timeframe designated by the teacher will be converted to a 0.

**Performance:** Students are expected to complete all learning designated as performance (account for 70% of grade). All work needs to be completed within the timeframes identified by the teacher. Students who do not complete performance assignments on time will have five student contact days to turn in late work **without lowering their grade one grade**. After the five days if work is not turned in students will be assigned learning recovery designed by the teacher, building team, and/or department to help them complete assignments designated as performance. Learning recovery may occur before, during, or after school. Building learning recovery plans will need to be documented at all three levels (teacher, team, and building). ~~Students who choose not to attend learning recovery opportunities may have their grade reduced up to, but no more than 1 point.~~ **All performances are to be passed for the student to pass the class.** Based upon student need teachers may accept late work without penalty, pending teacher determination of the circumstances (e.g. prolonged illness etc.).

Previously assigned work that has not been turned in prior to last ten days of the trimester will not be accepted unless special circumstances or previously agreed upon by teacher and student. No late work will be accepted past the last day of the trimester unless previously agreed upon by the teacher and the student.

#### **REDO**

Assignments for practice (30%) are not eligible to be redone unless a teacher determines a redo on practice is necessary based upon student need.

Students must demonstrate ~~mastery~~ **understanding** of the power grade level/course level expectations. Students may demonstrate ~~mastery (letter grade of D)~~ **understanding** in multiple ways and over multiple opportunities. In order to retake/redo performance assignment students must demonstrate that they have reviewed/reworked previous learning.

Students may redo work designated as performance one time after earning a passing grade ~~after demonstrating~~ **if they demonstrate** that they have reviewed/reworked previous learning.

**Research:** Feedback that is given on an assignment that can't be revised or that is not clearly and specifically related to future work is unlikely to be seen as useful by the student. (Marzano, 2006) Policies that give only partial credit for revisions are little better than no-revision policies-why should the student spend time and effort revising something if the best he can hope for is a

slight improvement in the grade, despite the fact that he now understands how to do the work? (Wormeli, 2006)

High performing teachers who are focused on students' growth and mastery allow work and assessments to be redone. Inexperienced or novice teachers who are primarily focused on how students do in comparison to others, a limiting reference for differentiated instruction teachers, usually do not allow work and assessment to be redone. If the purpose of grades is to communicate achievement, teachers are likely to give students full credit when revisions or retakes demonstrate better achievement. (2005, p.60-*Classroom Assessment*/Nolan and Taylor).

**Rationale:** Not accepting late work tells a student that completing the work is not important. When a student is given a zero for failing to complete an assignment or for failure to complete an exam, we educators see it as a consequence that will motivate the student to complete future assignments and exams for fear of receiving another zero. In actuality, it is reinforcement to the student that not completing assignments and exams is acceptable and OK; hence the attitude, "I don't want to do the work, I'll just take a zero."

Not all students are ready to receive what we have to offer, nor are they ready to learn at the same pace as their classmates. When we hold students to one moment in one particular day of the school year to demonstrate mastery in a topic, we are telling them that they must learn at the same rate, to the same extent, and with the same tools and resources as their classmates, or they will suffer. In a differentiated classroom, high performing teachers allow students to redo assessments for full credit.

If grades are truly meant to stand for students' level of competence at the end of the quarter, trimester, unit, or year, teachers must ask themselves, "Does it matter how quickly they reached competence? Does it matter if it took extra feedback or a second revision?" (Nolan and Taylor, *Classroom Assessment*, 2005). Much like teaching a 16 year old how to drive, what really matters is not how many times he/she practiced parallel parking, but rather whether the youngster can parallel park in the end before receiving their license. Ultimately what matters is whether or not the student has mastered the knowledge or skill. How long or how much practice it took is really not important.

The fastest growth spurt in human development is from zero to age two. We change more during this time physically, emotionally, and intellectually than at any other time outside of the uterus, and the pace of development (i.e. walking, crawling, and talking) is different from person to person. It would be absurd to demand that all children begin walking at the eighth hour of the second day of the eleventh month of their lives. (Wormeli, 2006).

**Best Practice Examples:** The high performing teacher has several different types of assessments for the students so kids who fail tests can be successful. He/she allows students to retest as many times as they need to, to show they know the concept or skill. The effective teacher provides consistent descriptive feedback to let kids know what improvements were needed and what they are doing right in order to help students become more confident in their abilities and demonstrate grades that reflect what the student can truly do.

**Ineffective Examples:** A low performing teacher assesses the student's knowledge on a geometry proof. The ineffective teacher tests the student after instruction but before the students have mastered the content. Then the teacher denies the student the option to redo

the assessment. Is the teacher in the classroom to teach so that the student learns, or is he/she there to present curriculum, then hold an assessment?

**Activity to Illustrate:** If you were to take a quiz right now on the district’s blood borne pathogen training....how would you do? Given that the last time you saw it was probably August, my guess is several of you would prefer to take the test after review for a redo.

**Guideline #5 (accommodations):** Accommodations and modifications are provided to students with special needs.

A special needs student should not receive a lower grade because the appropriate accommodation and modifications of the learning expectations were made. Appropriate accommodations and modifications should be documented in the IEP.

**Research:** Grades for all students should accurately demonstrate what they know and what they are able to do. If we want grades to be accurate indicators of mastery, then we have to remove any barrier to students coming to know the material, as well as any barrier to their successful demonstration of mastery.

Think of a student who needs glasses. We deny that student a fair and accurate rendering of mastery when we remove the glasses in the misguided attempt to be equal. What is fair is not always equal. (Wormeli, 2006)

**Rationale:** The accommodation should not lower the grade. Barriers of instruction and assessment include: inappropriate testing formats, requiring all students to learn at the same pace as their classmates, using the same tools with all students when different tools are needed by some, inflexible teaching, and narrow focus curricula. Accommodations should be provided.

**Best Practice Examples:** The high performing teacher differentiates and scaffolds in order to meet the needs of all students. Imagine the situation in which a few students are struggling to make sense of text and the teacher provides a matrix or similar graphic organizer to help structure their thinking. Using the prompts from the organizer, these once-struggling students are now able to identify and organize the information.

**Ineffective Examples:** The low performing teacher does not remove barriers of instruction and assessment such as: inappropriate testing formats, requiring all students to learn at the same pace as their classmates, using the same tools with all students when different tools are needed by some, inflexible teaching, and narrow focus curricula. If the teacher does not provide an accommodation they may in a misguided attempt “to be equal” lower the special needs child grade since that student received more time for testing, or an advanced organizer for not making, etc. The accommodation should not lower the grade.

**Activity to Illustrate to Staff:** Pretend you need reading glasses and try to read this document. Wouldn’t you prefer to have your accommodation (reading glasses)?

**Guideline #6 (Advanced Courses, HS ONLY):** The high school grade assigned to Dual Credit and AP courses will be adjusted at the end of each trimester.

The high school grade assigned to Dual Credit and AP courses will be adjusted at the end of each trimester. If passing, the final high school grade assigned to dual credit and AP courses will be raised one letter grade. If the student is receiving an A for the AP/DC course, the HS grade will be raised to 4.5.

**Research & Rationale:** Many teachers feel the more complex and demanding a task or concept, the more credit we want to give students for having mastered it. Credit proportional to the achievement has been a common practice in many schools. Following this principle, some school grades carry more weight; students are supposedly more motivated to enroll in those advanced courses in order to improve their grade point average. Dr. Thomas Guskey claims that, “We know of no evidence that shows (weighted grades) serve to motivate students to enroll in more challenging courses or dissuade students from enrolling in lower-level or remedial courses” (Guskey & Baily 2001, p. 134).

However, according to one study on weighted grades for gifted and talented students (Cognard, 1996) the cumulative advantages of equity for students, the importance of encouraging students to take honors and AP classes, the fact that simple, unweighted GPA may place students at a disadvantage for college admissions and/or scholarship awards indicate that high schools should weight grades.

**References:**

Cognard, Anne (1996). The Case for Weighting Grades and Waiving Classes for Gifted and Talented High School Students. National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented.

Guskey, Thomas R., and Jane M. Bailey. 2001 Developing Grading and Reporting Systems for Student Learning. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Marzano, Robert. 2006. Classroom Assessment and Grading Practices. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Nolen, Susan Bobbitt, and Catherin S. Taylor. 2005. Classroom Assessment: Supporting Teaching and Learning in Real Classrooms. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson-Merrill-Prentice Hall.

Wormeli, Rick. 2006. Fair Isn't Always Equal: Assessing and Grading in the Differentiated Classroom. Portland, MA: Stenhouse Publishers.

## Assessing Behavior

### What

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Council Bluffs District Grading Guideline #2 states:

**Guideline #2 (behavior):** Letter grades, derived from the 4-point scale, will be based solely on achievement of course/grade level standards. Student attendance, effort, ability, engagement, improvement, attitude, and other behaviors will be reported separately from achievement using Council Bluffs Community Schools Employability Skills Rubric.

Clarification: Scores using the employability scale will be reported holistically quarterly for all students; however, the frequency of reporting this information is based on individual student needs or the content of the class. Scores derived from the Employability Skills Scale will not be included in students' GPA.

Nonacademic factors such as behavior, attendance, and effort are not incorporated into academic grades. Participation points *may* be used if that is the actual skill that is being taught. For example, if a student is performing in a musical group or needs to participate in a team sport in order to demonstrate understanding of concepts being taught.

### Why

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Measuring behavior is subjective and does not reflect what a student has learned. Grades are a reflection of learning, not behavior. For more rationale on this guideline please refer to the Grading Practices Research Summary and the FAQ section found in this manual.

### How

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Use the Employability Scale found on the following page.

### Guidelines for Using

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Unlike academic measurement topics, employability skills are assessed via teacher observation. One option for observing the life skill topics is to select a specific day each week when scores are assigned to students. For example, a high school social studies teacher might use the last 10 minutes of class each Friday to assign and communicate scores to students for the week. Thus, over a nine week grading period, the teacher would have recorded nine scores on all of the employability skills for each student.

Another variation may be to ask students to score themselves on the employability skills. These scores may be compared with those assigned by the teacher. Another option is to record scores for students on the employability skills as they are observed. For example, if a teacher notices that a given student is working in a group particularly well on a given day, the teacher might record a score for that one student only for the life skill working in groups. This "situational score" can be added to the scores that are recorded weekly. *Scoring and recording of employability skills is up to the discretion of the teacher, these examples are included to provide guidance.*

### Employability Skills Rubric

		<b>Participation</b>	<b>Work Completion</b>	<b>Behavior</b>	<b>Working with Others</b>
<b>IOWA CORE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILL STANDARDS</b>		<i>Adapts to and carries out various roles and responsibilities and works flexibly in a climate of change.</i>	<i>Demonstrates productivity and accountability by meeting high expectations.</i>	<i>Demonstrates integrity and ethical behavior; demonstrates initiative and self-direction and uses individual talents and skills for productive outcomes.</i>	<i>Communicates and works productively with others, incorporating different perspectives and cross cultural understanding, to increase innovation and the quality of work; exhibits social responsibility while collaborating to achieve common goals.</i>
<b>LEADER LEVEL</b> <i>Demonstrates personal commitment and mastery, and encourages others by work and deed to do the same.</i>	<b>4</b>	Arrives on time with materials. Participation reflects intensity and persistence. Advances the goals of the class through personal contributions and by assisting others.	Organization, goal setting and time management are exemplary and serve as models to assist others. Work is completed on time and reflects standards of quality and dedication to strive for excellence.	Demonstrates a well-formed sense of what is right and makes personal choices to try to do the right thing. Follows through on commitments. Respects others and shows courtesy. Sets an example of self-control across situations. Chooses appropriate conduct so classroom rules and procedures are not an issue. Encourages the development of these qualities in others.	Demonstrates effective teamwork across groups and purposes. Shows initiative and capability to organize and lead a group toward stated goals, but does his/her part in actual group tasks. Is respected by others and encourages their teamwork and participation. Shows sensitivity and takes perspectives of others seriously. Can help resolve most conflicts. Exhibits high level of competence in all identified group skills.
<b>PARTICIPANT LEVEL</b> <i>Carries out responsibilities in an adequate way but does not take on a leadership role.</i>	<b>3</b>	Arrives on time with materials. Participation in individual, whole group and small group activities meets classroom expectations.	Demonstrates adequate organization and time management. Work is completed on time and meets all requirements.	Accepts responsibility for personal choices and mistakes. Respects others. Displays adequate self-direction toward productive outcomes and follows all classroom rules and procedures.	Demonstrates adequate teamwork and willingness to work with others. Assumes a fair share of responsibility for group tasks. Rarely shows leadership to organize or take responsibility for completion of group tasks. Exhibits adequate group maintenance and interpersonal skills.
	<b>2</b>	With some noteworthy exceptions, participation meets classroom expectations.	With some noteworthy exceptions, work is completed on time and meets requirements.	With some noteworthy exceptions, demonstrates adequate personal behavior choices to follow classroom rules and procedures.	Contributes to completion of a group task. With some noteworthy exceptions, exhibits adequate group and interpersonal skills.
<b>DETRACTOR LEVEL</b> <i>Does not meet the standards personally, and detracts from others meeting the standards.</i>	<b>1</b>	With considerable help or prodding, participation meets minimal classroom expectations.	With considerable help or prodding, work is on time and meets minimal requirements.	With considerable help or prodding, conduct follows classroom rules and procedures.	With considerable help or prodding, exhibits group and interpersonal skills that have been identified.
	<b>0</b>	Even with considerable help or prodding, participation does not meet classroom expectations.	Even with frequent help or prodding, the student does not hand in work on time or meet requirements.	Even with frequent help or prodding, conduct does not follow classroom rules and procedures.	Even with frequent help or prodding, does not exhibit group maintenance and interpersonal skills that have been identified.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### What is the difference between the 70% performance or demonstrating learning versus 30% practice or building knowledge?

Seventy percent of the student's grade needs to be based on the essential knowledge, concepts, or skills that you want students to know. This can include, but is not limited to, unit tests, projects, and essays. Think in terms of those tasks that you ask students to complete that demonstrate their learning of essential knowledge and concepts that you consider vital to current growth and future success.

Thirty percent of the student's grade needs to be based on the learning the student did along the way to build knowledge in order to be successful on the 70% type work. Independent practice on daily work, short quizzes over multiple lessons, and reviews or warm-ups are examples of assignments that would fit in the 30% category.

The reason for the 70/30 split is that grades should represent learning and mastery of essential concepts. If we grade too heavily on students practice or their steps in coming to know a concept then the final grade becomes inaccurate. A grade that holds the building knowledge (30%) equal to the demonstrating learning (70%) represents what the student knows and is able to do equal to the practice attempts and immature understanding of the concepts along the way which results in an inaccurate grade.

**Bottom line:** The majority of the grade (at least 70%) should be based on students demonstrating mastery of essential concepts. A small portion of the grade (30% or less) should be based on students attempts to build knowledge in order to learn essential concepts.

### Why isn't behavior or effort included in the academic grade?

Behavior is not included in the academic grade because it is difficult to measure objectively. We don't have a commonly accepted, legally justifiable, nonsubjective method for measuring how hard or sincerely someone is working. We can provide anecdotal evidence and list the amount of time and resources students spend on a task, but identifying personal effort levels objectively eludes us. We can chart work habits in order to provide feedback and develop positive behaviors as true habits, but we do not have an accurate yardstick for effort. Comparing some students who went all out on a project with those who did just the bare minimum to satisfy the requirements is a subjective call. One student's outstanding effort is another student's quickly thrown together, scribbled page. Declaring the extent and impact of students' efforts with authority can be difficult to defend.



We know there is a very high correlation between academic success and effort, behavior, and attendance. When we mix ancillary criteria that are not meant to serve as indicators of mastery with assessments that are meant to serve as such, we can't trust the results or make decisions based on such criteria.

**Bottom line:** Measuring behavior is subjective and does not reflect what a student has learned. Grades are a reflection of learning, not behavior. Use the *Employability Skills Rubric* found in this manual to report student behavior.

### Can work or assessments be redone for full credit ?

Not allowing work or assessments to be redone for full credit is another way of saying we don't allow multiple attempts at mastery. Many of us have said the following to students: "You can redo the test, but the highest grade you can earn on it is a B out of deference to those who studied hard and achieved an A the first time around." "For every problem you go back and correct, I'll give you half a point of credit," or you can retake the test, but I will average the new grade with the original one."

If we hold such a philosophy and a student has been giving sincere effort during the unit, we are holding the student's development against him or her. This is an unfair stance. The truth is, not all students are ready to receive what we have to offer, nor are they ready to learn at the same pace as their classmates. Even adults learn at varying paces from one another. Adolescents and young adolescents have amazingly varied rates of learning – they are all in dramatic transition.

The teacher who teaches the unit of study but then tests the student before he or she has mastered everything makes a common and an understandable mistake. We can't know the perfect time to assess every student's level of proficiency. This isn't a problem; however, because we use that feedback from the initial assessment, reteach or assist the student, and allow him or her to try again. We're out for students' success, not just to document their deficiencies.

The ineffective and unethical response, however, would be to get in the way as the child strives to learn and demonstrate understanding to the fullest extent. The teacher who denies the option to redo tasks and assessments in order to reach the standard of excellence set for students has to reconsider his/ her role: Is the teacher in the classroom to teach so that students learn, or is he or she there to present curriculum, then hold an assessment "limbo" yardstick and see who in the class can bend flexibly and fit within its narrow parameters?

If we really want students to reflect on their mistakes and revise their thinking and/or performances, they have to know their efforts will count. If we want them to heed our feedback on their work, they have to know that it can be used to improve their status.

**Bottom line:** YES.

## What about extra credit?

In order to answer this question let's look at two historical rationales for why extra credit has been awarded to students and why these practices might not be fair and equitable.

### Historical Rationale #1:

Extra credit gives students hope, and if the student is willing to take the initiative to do something a little extra, he/she should be rewarded by the addition of more points or a raised grade.

### New Reality:

Anything that has enough points attached to it to alter a grade's accuracy in terms of what students have mastered should be avoided. Grades reflect learning and rewarding students with a grade without learning is unethical. For example, if a student demonstrates a C level of mastery, he or she shouldn't be given an opportunity to artificially inflate that grade with other work that doesn't hold him or her accountable for the same learning outcomes as the original assignment. Substituting a poster for an essay, for example, wouldn't cut it if teaching essay writing. To quote a teacher: "How can you do the extra when you haven't done the regular?"

On the other hand, if the teacher is simply looking for a way for a student to express what they know about a concept it doesn't matter what test format is used. Though we might consider alternative routes to demonstrate mastery as we design units, the choices for the final offering are made after serious contemplation. If a student can muster an alternative assignment that accounts for everything we are seeking, alternative methods for demonstrating learning can be given serious consideration.

### Historical Rationale #2:

Extra credit can be an incentive to students to stretch themselves, pushing beyond the regular unit of study.

### New Reality:

To offer extra credit as a way to compel students to push themselves is okay in some situations, within limits. If we find students getting interested and pushing themselves only when the extra credit options are offered, however, we may need to rethink our lesson plans. Students should be challenged and stretched by the regular lessons, not just the extra credit experiences. We need to keep our minds

open to the possibility that advanced students need to have a higher operating level in most of their work, not just the occasional extra credit opportunity. If we find students progressing only during enrichment or advanced, extra credit experiences, let's meet those students' needs by turning those types of extra credit experiences into the standard operating procedure for them every day.

**Bottom line:** Avoid the use of extra credit in most cases; however, there may be some appropriate uses within limits.

### What about bonus points?

Bonus points on tests call for the same caution as when using extra credit. If the student falters in his or her demonstration of mastery with the regular test items, but overcomes those scoring losses with points from a bonus section, then we have to reconsider whether the new, bonus-inflated grade really represents what the student knows and is able to do. This is especially a concern if the bonus questions or prompts are unrelated to the test's topic, such as the spurious bonus questions used by some teachers: "What famous person died on this day in 1989?" or "What was the score of last night's Orioles game?"

If the bonus problems allow students to demonstrate the content and skill proficiencies required in the regular test items, then it's probably okay to use the bonus-inflated grade, but it begs two questions: If the bonus questions require the same skills and content as the regular items, then why are they not a part of the main body of the test? And, if the student can respond to the bonus questions that require the same skills and content proficiency as the regular test items, why couldn't he or she do the regular ones to show proficiency?

**Bottom line:** Avoid the use of bonus points in most cases; however, there may be some appropriate uses within limits.