

Elementary Grading Practices Guidelines



CONESTOGA VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT
2110 Horseshoe Road
Lancaster, PA 17601

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INTRODUCTION

A grade is a description of a student's performance on an explicit set of skills over a period of time. High quality reporting requires a system that clearly, accurately, and consistently communicates standards for student learning as well as student progress toward achieving those standards. In addition, effective grades must be meaningful and support learning.

Although communication with parents has been the primary purpose for grading, clear communication of student progress and achievement is also important:

- to students, so they can understand how their learning is progressing.
- to teachers, so they can plan instruction to meet the needs of individual students.
- to administrators, so they can provide the necessary supports to improve the learning process.
- to others in the educational system who help ensure success for all students.

Tests and other assessments should not surprise students. Students should be aware of what will be included on the test and should understand what they will be asked to do to provide evidence of their learning. This does not mean that teachers should "teach the test;" it means that teachers should "test the teaching" in a way which is reasonable and fair to students (Schafer 1997).

In order to be reasonable and fair to students:

- Involve students in discussions about assessment, including grading, throughout the teaching and learning process.
- Consider student growth when determining proficiency. An averaged grade does not necessarily reflect a student's true knowledge and understanding of the information taught. Focus on the most recent indicators of learning.
- Provide frequent and immediate feedback on student performance.
- Provide extended time to complete assessments for students who require time to reflect and analyze in order to produce quality work.
- Frequently check for understanding.
- Provide alternative assessment methods for students requiring other ways to demonstrate what they know and can do.
- Student grades should reflect individual achievement. Group grades undermine motivation, convey the wrong message, violate individual accountability, create resistance to cooperative learning, and may be challenged in court.
- Discuss plagiarism guidelines. Students should understand that using the work of others as their own is not ethical.
- Assign no less than 50%. A grade should not be an insurmountable obstacle to student success.

- Reassess without penalty. Provide second or multiple chance opportunities for students to demonstrate growth. The assessment used for the “retake” should be of high quality and available to all students.
- Use caution with Extra Credit. Adding additional points to a student’s grade distorts the grade and does not give a true representation of what the student knows and is able to do. Student willingness to complete additional assignments may be represented in the *Habits of Successful Learners* section of the Report Card.

The following grading guidelines represent an understanding of best practices gained from books, research, participation in professional development, collaboration, and the opinion of experts in the field. Consistent implementation of these guidelines by all professional staff members will result in enhanced student learning, improved academic performance, greater student success, and more effective communication with parents. These guidelines should be considered standard educational practice in CVSD.

ESSENTIAL VOCABULARY

Accommodation

Adaptations or adjustments that *do not fundamentally change the grade level standard*; student is held responsible for the same standards as every other student in the class, but the method of demonstrating mastery of the standard may be adjusted

Example:

1. Audiotape of a lesson or lecture when a student struggles to take notes
2. Extended time

Achievement

The demonstration of student performance measured against established criteria (performance standards)

Authentic Assessment

Assessment, tied to real life learning, that provides students with opportunities to demonstrate what they know and are able to do

Continuum

A visual representation of development using descriptors to depict developmental stages of learning; the focus is on the learner and is based on what the student learns, rather than what is taught

Differentiated Instruction

An individualized approach aimed at engaging students in learning and demonstrating their progress based on readiness, interests, and learning profiles.

Fair Assessment

A process used by teachers and students before, during, and after instruction to provide feedback and adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve student achievement; the four types of assessment include benchmark, diagnostic, formative, and summative

Formative Assessment

Assessment designed to provide direction for improving instruction and/or adjustment to a program for individual students or for a whole class (daily work/performance, initial drafts/attempts, homework, and questions during instruction); these assessments should be used for screening, diagnosing, and progress monitoring

Grade

A number or letter reported at the end of a period of time as a summary statement of what a student knows and is able to do in relation to curricular objectives and standards

Instructional Team

A team comprised of *classroom teacher(s), reading specialist and/or RtII coordinator, guidance counselor, other building specialists (ESL, Special Education, Psychologist, etc.)* as appropriate, and *principal*

Modification

Adaptations that *fundamentally change the grade level standard*; reflects *instructional level work* rather than grade level work

Example:

1. A 4th grade student with a significant cognitive deficiency is included for science and while the student may not be ready for the ecosystem, the IEP would write standards based goals from a fundamentally related standard in sorting and classifying. This student would not be assessed on the same standards as the non-disabled peers and would be graded on the achievement alternative standard (Jung and Guskey, April 2007).
2. 9th grade ELL must master 7th grade vocabulary

Performance Standard

The level at which students are expected to demonstrate knowledge and skill

Standard

A target to guide instruction and to focus learning

Summative Assessment

Assessment designed to provide information about a student's achievement at the end of a period of instruction (tests, final draft/attempts, projects, reports, exhibits, portfolios, performances, tasks)

ELEMENTARY GRADING PRACTICES GUIDELINES

1. The grades each student receives should be an accurate reflection of his or her academic performance based on a variety of multiple assessments.

- a. Only grades based on achievement of curricular goals are used to report student progress to parents.
- b. Teachers should use common district assessments in conjunction with assessments from subject specific programs (ie: Scott Foresman) to determine overall level of achievement.
- c. Grading procedures shall be related directly to Core Understandings and Essential Questions as stated in district curriculum and state standards.
- d. Teachers will communicate with students, verbally and in writing, what it is they are expected to know and be able to do. These Core Understandings and Essential Questions should come directly from lesson plans aligned to district curriculum.

2. Student mastery of skills and content defined by the curriculum should be the basis for grades.

Since grades are a representation of how well the student understands what a teacher expects him/her to know, all grades will come from assessments that measure only the student's achievement of curricular goals.

3. Effort, participation, attitude, and other behaviors shall not be included in grades, but shall be reported separately.

These areas are not calculated as part of a student's grade. Since the grade is a reflection of the student's knowledge of the stated curricular goals only, these behavioral areas are reported separately.

4. Feedback will be provided to students on formative assessments.

- a. Assessment data should be used to identify individual instructional needs and guide planning.
- b. Formative assessment, such as homework, is usually intended as practice only, and in most cases should not be used to determine grades. Grades based on subject matter that has not yet been mastered will not accurately reflect or support meaningful learning.

5. Each assessment used or developed by a teacher should meet three standards of quality.

- a. Assessments should arise from a clearly articulated set of standards-based achievement expectations.
- b. Assessments should serve an instructionally relevant purpose.

- c. Assessments should match the knowledge or skill being evaluated as authentically as possible.

6. Late work shall be handled as follows:

- a. Teachers may set due dates and deadlines for all work that will be part of a student's grade.
- b. Work handed in late, if penalized, shall not exceed 2% per day to a maximum of 10%.
- c. If the assignment had a value of 100 points, a student would lose no more than 2 points per day to a maximum of 10 points. This is because giving a zero or lowering a student's grade by several letter grades does not reflect his/her knowledge and a grade is to represent what a student knows and is able to do.
- d. Teachers may exempt students from penalties.
- e. It is not required that teachers deduct points for late work.
- f. Care should be taken to ensure that penalties, if used, do not distort achievement or motivation.
- g. A student's grades must be a reflection of knowledge, not penalties.
- h. In addition to the aforementioned guidelines, teachers may document habitual late work in the Habits of Successful Learners section of the Report Card.

7. Absences shall be handled as follows:

- a. Students shall not be penalized for absences.
- b. A student's grade should not be affected for being absent from school.
- c. Students must be given an opportunity to make up any work that counts for a grade without the grade being changed in any way because of the absence.
- d. District make-up guidelines should be followed; however, additional time may be granted at the discretion of the teacher.

8. Incomplete work shall be handled as follows:

- a. Work that is not submitted will be identified as "I" (Incomplete). Zeros will not be used.
- b. Students are expected to complete all required work and will be given the opportunity to do so.
- c. In determining grades, teachers must decide whether they have sufficient evidence of achievement. If not, the grade recorded shall be an "I" for Insufficient Evidence/Incomplete. An "I" means no credit will be given until the missing work is completed and the grade is updated.

CREATING FAIR AND MEANINGFUL GRADES FOR ALL LEARNERS

When an instructional team determines whether to accommodate or modify, they must consider the circumstances of the accommodation or modification's use and /or the purpose of the assessment. Teachers should provide accommodations and modifications in order to support student growth while balancing levels of student frustration and challenge.

Instructional teams agree up front on the achievement standards that are appropriate for a student and report these separately. When a grade is based on a *modified standard* (not a grade level standard), teachers must provide additional information to parents, communicating what was actually measured. This supplemental document will list the modifications the student received in addition to his/her progress at instructional level.

MARKING THE REPORT CARD

For ALL Students

- Report card grades reflect independent grade level performance.
- The % score will be rounded to the nearest whole number.
- No % grades will be given that are less than 50% or greater than 100%.
- Students who receive consistent and frequent accommodations *above and beyond what other students receive* should receive the document highlighting those accommodations with the report card.
- Students who receive modifications (below grade level instructional work) are not eligible to receive a Proficient (3) or Advanced (4) on their report card in that subject or on line items (skills) beneath the subject.

Students without an IEP receiving Tier 2 and/or 3 interventions and grade level curriculum

All students who take core grade level classroom assessments without modifications will receive a report card grade based on grade level work. Students without an IEP may receive standard testing accommodations such as small group, extended time, reading text aloud to self or an adult, or sitting in a distraction free location without penalty. Documents communicating the student's accommodations, instructional level performance, and growth will be completed by the classroom teacher in conjunction with intervention provider(s).

Students without an IEP with extensive reading needs receiving modified curriculum and assessments (not a grade level standard)

The classroom teacher and the instructional team will work together in identifying these students and determining what types of testing modifications will be made. Parents of these students should be notified when assessment modifications are made. Students who are not proficient on grade level work will receive a Basic or Below Basic in the proficiency level on the report card. The % area will remain

blank. Documents communicating the student's modifications, instructional level performance, and growth will be completed by the classroom teacher in conjunction with intervention provider(s). Reading a reading assessment aloud to a student is considered a *modification* and will result in a non-proficient grade.

Students with an IEP for Reading

Reading report card grades should reflect *independent grade level work*. In addition to the report card, we will also communicate instructional level performance via the IEP progress report and other supplemental documents. An IEP progress report describing the attainment toward goals and objectives will be completed by the special education teacher each trimester. A document communicating the student's accommodations and/or modifications, instructional level performance, and growth will be completed by the classroom teacher in conjunction with the special education teacher. Reading a reading assessment aloud to a student is considered a *modification* and will result in a non-proficient grade.

If a student's work is modified (not a grade level standard) and there is no grade level data on which to base a grade, the student will receive a Basic, Below Basic, or NA in the proficiency level on the report card. Enter NA in the % area.

Students with an IEP for Math

Math report card grades should reflect *independent grade level work*. In addition to the report card, we will also communicate instructional level performance via the IEP progress report and other supplemental documents. An IEP progress report describing the attainment toward goals and objectives will be completed by the special education teacher each trimester. A document communicating the student's accommodations and/or modifications, instructional level performance, and growth will be completed by the classroom teacher in conjunction with the special education teacher. Reading a math assessment aloud to a student is considered an *accommodation* and will not result in a non-proficient grade.

If a student's work is modified (not a grade level standard) and there is no grade level data on which to base a grade, the student will receive a Basic, Below Basic, or NA in the proficiency level on the report card. Enter NA in the % area.

English Learners

Students who receive Scott Foresman from their grade level teacher as their core reading program (generally language level 3 and above) are graded the same as all students are graded. It is expected that these students will be supported with appropriate accommodations.

Students who receive pull-out ESL instruction for language acquisition (language level 1 or 2 and some level 3) will receive a Basic, Below Basic, or NA in the proficiency level on the report card for Reading. Enter NA in the % area. A document communicating the student's modifications, instructional level

performance, and growth will be completed collaboratively by the ESL and classroom teachers.

The instructional team will collaborate to determine if and which modifications will be made for an ELL. Classroom and ESL teachers should communicate regularly regarding the student's performance in all academic subjects, as language acquisition affects a student's achievement in math, science, and social studies as well as language arts.

EXAMPLES OF ACCOMMODATIONS

All students may receive accommodations as needed without penalty.

Presentation Accommodations

Instruction provided in smaller segments
Visual aids
Auditory aids
Multi-sensory instructions
Speaking slower
Pairing written and oral instructions
Opportunity to have instructions in written form instead of verbal, or vice versa

Homework Accommodations

Reduced homework assignments
Dictating answers to parent or aide
Opportunity to use the computer
Audio recording of instructions
Extended time on major assignments

Assessment/Test Accommodations

Open book test
Preview of test questions
Word bank for fill in blank questions
No penalty for handwriting
Adjust test length or format
Extended time for tests
Multiple test sessions
Student demonstrates understanding of directions
Highlight key words/phrases in directions
Limited choices for multiple choice questions (use judiciously)
Recordings of required reading*
Peer assistance with reading*
Adult assistance with reading*
Oral exams with oral responses*
No penalty for spelling or grammar**
Test answers recorded**
Opportunity to create a model instead of writing**
Dictating or illustrating answers on short essay**

Assignment Accommodations

Reduced assignments
Individual contracts
Emphasis on major points
Task analysis of assignments
Fewer spelling words
Multiple choice spelling test
Tiered assignments
Assignment menu
Extended time for oral response
Extended time for written response
Alternative readings*
Recorded assignments*
Opportunity to respond orally**
Opportunity to create a model instead of writing**
Dramatize instead of writing**

Environmental Accommodations

Small group setting
Preferential seating
Alternative seating
Study carrel for independent work
Minimized visual distractions
More physical space for learner
Headphones

Material Accommodations

Copy of teacher notes
Prepared study guides
Guided outline for note taking
Textbook in native language*
Providing reading materials at student's instructional/lower grade level*

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

**** These are considered accommodations in all subjects except Writing. In Writing, these are considered modifications.**

SAMPLE SUPPLEMENTAL DOCUMENT

Document accommodations on this page and send home with the report card.

Report Card Insert 20XX-20XX

Student Name _____

Teacher Name _____ Grade _____

Trimester ____ 1 ____ 2 ____ 3

An accommodation is an adaptation or adjustment that does not fundamentally change the grade level standard; the student is held responsible for the same standards as every other student in the class, but the method of demonstrating mastery of the standard may be adjusted.

Subject	Accommodation	Progress
Reading	Pair written and oral instructions, small group settings	Lyla performs best when working with the teacher in a small group and seeing and hearing instructions.
Writing	Extended time for assignments	Lyla needs extra time for writing assessments and is performing on Basic level.
Spelling	Fewer words on weekly tests.	Lyla scores 70-80% on weekly tests.
Grammar		
Math	Homework and test questions are reduced.	Lyla completes homework accurately and scores proficient on tests.
Science/Social Studies	Tests are read aloud	Lyla scores 80-90% on science and social studies tests with this accommodation.
Behavior		12

SAMPLE SUPPLEMENTAL DOCUMENT

Document modifications on this page and send home with the report card.

Report Card Insert 20XX-20XX

Student Name _____

Teacher Name _____ Grade _____

Trimester ____1 ____2 ____3

*A modification is an adaptation that fundamentally changes the grade level standard;
a modification reflects instructional level work rather than grade level work.*

Subject	Modification	Progress
Reading	Reading tests read aloud to student	Lyla participates often in classroom discussions. Her average weekly tests have been 85% when read aloud to her.
Writing	Drawing or dramatization to express thoughts	Lyla is proficient when able to draw or dramatize rather than write.
Spelling	Alternate spelling list	Lyla consistently spells 3 rd grade level words with 90% accuracy.
Grammar		
Math	Instruction at different grade level	Lyla is being instructed at a 4 th grade level of Core Math. Her unit tests have shown mastery of the 4 th grade mathematical concepts with an average of 75% on tests.
Science/Social Studies		
Behavior		

GRADES 1 & 2 ASSESSMENTS

Report Card grades should be determined using multiple measures of several or all of the following assignments, assessments, and observations.

SUBJECT	ASSESSMENTS
Reading	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Fluency 	DRA Fresh Read (grade 2) Teacher Observation WPM test
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Accuracy 	DRA Fresh Read (grade 2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Comprehension 	Scott Foresman selection tests Look Back & Write (grade 2) Fresh Read (grade 2) DRA Scott Foresman picture retelling cards Written/oral retellings Leveled reader questions Differentiated Assessments Classroom work Teacher Observation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes high use words 	Scott Foresman high frequency words
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies strategies to unknown words 	DRA Fresh Read (grade 2) Teacher Observation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates understanding of vocabulary words 	Scott Foresman selection tests Classroom Work
Writing	District assessments Classroom writing samples Daily edit
Spelling	Scott Foresman spelling tests Classroom writing samples (spelling patterns, phonics skills)
Handwriting	Handwriting samples Zaner-Bloser worksheets
Math	Chapter tests CV common assessments Classroom work Otter Creek
Science	Classroom work Teacher observation
Social Studies	Classroom work Teacher observation
Technology	Teacher observation

GRADE 3 ASSESSMENTS

Report Card grades should be determined using multiple measures of several or all of the following assignments, assessments, and observations.

SUBJECT	ASSESSMENTS
Reading	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decodes and understands vocabulary 	Scott Foresman selection tests Scott Foresman unit tests Differentiated Assessments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehension on grade level text 	Scott Foresman selection tests Scott Foresman unit tests Look Back & Write Fresh Reads DRA Reading Log Differentiated Assessments Classroom Work Teacher Observation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reads grade level passages fluently and accurately 	Fresh Reads DRA Teacher Observation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independently reads “just right books” in a sustained way 	Reading Log Teacher Observation
Writing	District Assessments Classroom writing Daily Fix It Grammar and Spelling used in context
Spelling	Scott Foresman spelling tests
Handwriting	No % given on report cards
Math	Chapter and Unit tests CV common assessments Differentiated Assessments Otter Creek
Science	No % given on report cards
Social Studies	No % given on report cards

GRADE 4 ASSESSMENTS

Report Card grades should be determined using multiple measures of several or all of the following assignments, assessments, and observations.

SUBJECT	ASSESSMENTS
Reading	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decodes and understands vocabulary 	Scott Foresman selection tests Scott Foresman unit tests Differentiated Assessments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehends grade level text 	Scott Foresman selection tests Scott Foresman unit tests Look Back & Write Fresh Reads DRA Reading Log Differentiated Assessments Teacher Observation Classroom Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads grade level passages fluently and accurately 	Fresh Reads DRA Teacher Observation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustains independent reading 	Teacher Observation Reading Log
Writing	District Assessments Classroom writing Daily Fix It Grammar and Spelling used in context
Spelling	Scott Foresman spelling tests
Grammar	Scott Foresman grammar and other assessments Daily Fix It
Math	Chapter and Unit tests CV common assessments Differentiated Assessments Otter Creek
Science	Curriculum Based Assessments
Social Studies	Curriculum Based Assessments
Technology	Anchor projects

GRADE 5 ASSESSMENTS

Report Card grades should be determined using multiple measures of several or all of the following assignments, assessments, and observations.

SUBJECT	ASSESSMENTS
Reading	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decodes and understands vocabulary 	Scott Foresman selection tests Scott Foresman unit tests Differentiated Assessments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehends grade level text 	Scott Foresman selection tests Scott Foresman unit tests Look Back & Write Fresh Reads DRA Reading Log Differentiated Assessments Classroom Work Teacher Observation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reads grade level passages fluently and accurately 	Fresh Reads DRA Teacher Observation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustains independent reading 	Reading Log Teacher Observation
Writing	District Assessments Classroom writing Daily Fix It Grammar and Spelling used in context
Spelling	Scott Foresman spelling tests
Grammar	Scott Foresman grammar and other assessments Daily Fix It
Math	Chapter and Unit tests CV common assessments Differentiated Assessments
Science	Curriculum Based Assessments
Social Studies	Curriculum Based Assessments
Technology	Anchor projects

GRADE 6 ASSESSMENTS

Report Card grades should be determined using multiple measures of several or all of the following assignments, assessments, and observations.

SUBJECT	ASSESSMENTS
Reading	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decodes and understands vocabulary 	Scott Foresman selection tests Scott Foresman unit tests Differentiated Assessments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehends grade level text 	Scott Foresman selection tests Scott Foresman unit tests Look Back & Write Fresh Reads DRA Reading Log Differentiated Assessments Classroom Work Teacher Observation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reads grade level passages fluently and accurately 	Fresh Reads DRA Teacher Observation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustains independent reading 	Reading Log Teacher Observation
Writing	District Assessments Classroom writing Daily Fix It Grammar and Spelling used in context
Spelling	Scott Foresman Spelling Lists
Grammar	Scott Foresman grammar and other assessments Daily edits
Math	Chapter and Unit tests CV common assessments Differentiated Assessments
Science	Chapter tests Projects
Social Studies	Chapter tests Projects
Technology	Anchor projects

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