



District Grading Framework

Background: Considering parental inquiries and requests of building and district-level administration, a Bennington Public Schools Board of Education sub-committee approved the Director of Curriculum and Instruction to form a representative committee to embark upon a study of grading practices in the district. **The study was to engender consistent approaches to grading for the district.** The purpose of this framework, therefore, is to provide a tool to help educators to make consistent decisions about grading and grades.

The committee began meeting in the fall of 2015; and, by the fall of 2017, this framework was presented to all staff prior to being proposed to the Superintendent and Board of Education. The committee read numerous pieces of educational research on current best practices for grading, researched other districts' grading protocols, gathered informal input from colleagues, discussed current grading inconsistencies as presented by building administrators, and analyzed staff data from two separate survey opportunities provided for formal input to arrive at this framework. Throughout, the committee continually kept the high expectations of the district at the forefront of its work.

Ongoing professional learning and support will be key to embedding the philosophies and practices contained in this framework into the culture of Bennington Public Schools. As the district progresses in its use of this framework, the standing District Grading Committee will continue to monitor feedback and examine adjustments to grade reporting formats and practices.

***Purpose of Grading and Grades**

1. Consistently communicate student achievement at the time.
2. Consistently provide academic messages of student strengths and weaknesses.
3. Consistently provide information to students for self-evaluation.
4. Consistently document students' academic behaviors (attendance, effort, responsibility, etc.).

***Audience for Grading and Grades**

1. Students
2. Teachers of Students
3. Parents

*As determined by BPS staff surveys conducted in both the fall of 2015 and spring of 2016.

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Overall Grade Composition

Students' overall grades should be comprised of points earned on summative and formative assessments. In the elementary and middle grades, K-8, teachers will not include practice in the grade composition. In the high school grades, 9-12, grade levels and departments may include practice (as defined in this framework) up to 10% of the final grade.

Summative Assessments

Summative assessments provide for culminating judgements--summations--of student learning based on established learning standards. Summative assessments should be used at the end of learning units as opportunities for students to demonstrate application of knowledge and skill. These are frequently referred to as assessments OF learning.

Summative assessments may take the form of...

- projects.
- extended written responses, essays, research reports, etc.
- chapter, topic, or end-of-unit tests.
- district required assessments of Nebraska Academic Standards.
- performance-based assessments (i.e. fitness testing, safety testing, musical performances, and the like).

Summative assessments should be...

- administered after units of learning.
 - administered after opportunities to learn the content/skill have occurred.
 - administered after students have been provided feedback from formative assessments during the instructional/learning process.
 - designed with clear and descriptive levels of performance.
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Formative Assessments

Formative assessments guide teaching & learning. The process includes giving clear, actionable feedback to students, sharing learning goals, and modeling what success looks like. These are frequently referred to as assessments FOR learning.

Formative assessments should...

- be aligned in both content & format with summative assessments they should precede.
- provide students with timely, specific feedback---not just a "grade" (score, check mark, sticker, etc.), *but to affirm understanding, to direct what to do next, or to direct what to do differently.*
- provide information to teachers to guide differentiated instruction and/or personalized learning.

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- provide information to teachers (and students) about student strengths and weaknesses.
- provide curricular information as students move toward mastery of established learning objectives.

Reporting Student Learning

- K-2 = Learning Portfolios
 - Each K, 1st, and 2nd grade teacher in Bennington Public Schools will keep a portfolio of evidence documenting student learning toward consistent district learning standards/targets.
 - 21st Century Skills: Students will demonstrate an appropriate skill development and work ethic in the classroom setting as based on the skills listed below.

K - 2 Rubric	Beginning	Progressing	Proficient	Advanced
Creativity & Innovation	Rarely - communicates ideas -open to new ideas -handles challenges inappropriately	Sometimes -communicates ideas with others -open to new ideas -handles challenges inappropriately	Most of the time -communicates new ideas with others -open to new ideas -handles challenges appropriately	Always -effectively communicates new ideas with others -creates and encourages other to share new ideas -takes risks and learns from mistakes
Problem Solving	Rarely - able to solve various problems without much adult intervention	Sometimes - is able to solve various problems -may need guidance from adult or peer	Most of the time - is able to independently solve various problems	Always - willingly able to independently solve various problems with sensitivity and no prompting
Communication & Collaboration	Rarely -articulates thoughts and ideas using expected communication skills in a variety of forms. -demonstrates listening skills	Sometimes -articulates thoughts and ideas using expected communication skills in a variety of forms. -demonstrates listening skills for multiple situations	Most of the time - articulates thoughts and ideas using oral, written, and non-verbal communication skills in a variety of forms. -demonstrates listening skills for multiple situations	Always -articulates thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written, and non-verbal communication skills in a variety of forms. -effectively demonstrates listening skills for multiple situations
Flexibility & Adaptability	Rarely -accepts change even with guidance - accepts feedback in a positive way and may create significant negative behavior	Sometimes -needs guidance to change and may experience behavior problems - accepts feedback in a negative way	Most of the time - adapts to change without prompting or behavior problems - accepts feedback with a positive attitude	Always -willingly adapts to change without prompting or behavior problems - accepts feedback and makes positive behavior changes
Initiative & Self-Direction	Rarely - works	Sometimes - works independently	Most of the Time - works independently	Always - works independently

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	independently - stays on task - uses time effectively without redirections - demonstrates evidence of learning from mistakes	and needs redirections - needs redirections to use time effectively - demonstrates evidence of learning from mistakes	- uses time effectively -applies previous learning to guide future decisions	- goes beyond basic expectations when using time -reflects on prior knowledge to make informed decisions
Social & Cross-Cultural Skills	Rarely -knows when to listen and when to speak -is respectful to peers and adults -sensitive to cultural differences	Sometimes - struggles to know when to listen and when to speak -needs reminders to be respectful to peers and/or adults -needs reminders to be tolerant of cultural differences	Most of the Time -knows when to listen and when to speak -is respectful to peers and adults -tolerant of cultural differences, ideas, values	Always -knows when to listen and when to speak -is respectful to peers and adults -embraces cultural differences, ideas, values
Productivity and Accountability	Rarely -stays on task -completes tasks on time -works independently -able to participate and work in group learning situations	Sometimes -needs redirections to stay on task -is unable or unwilling to complete tasks on time -is distracting to others -needs guidance on how to participate in a group	Most of the Time -stays on task -completes tasks on time -works without disturbing others -participates and works well in group learning situations	Always -stays on task -completes tasks early -works without disturbing others -is a positive role model and contributing group member in learning situations
Leadership & Responsibility	Rarely -shows evidence of leadership and chooses to accept leadership roles	Sometimes -needs reminders to be a leader within the school community	Most of the Time -is a leader within the school community	Always -is a leader within the school community. - Leads with the interest of others

- **3-12 = Grades**

- Each 3rd through 12th grade teacher in Bennington Public Schools will keep an overall grade that reflects each student’s learning toward district learning standards/targets.
- Each grade level/course’s overall grade will include--*but not be limited to*--district common summative assessment results.
- The current 7-point grading scale will remain in place.
- K-5 Specials (art, library-technology, music, PE, Spanish) will move away from O, S, N to 4-point (Beginning, Progressing, Proficient, Advanced) scale for quarter grades. Each department will develop and publish rubrics in Curriculum Guides.

- K-5 Handwriting will also move away from O, S, N to 4-point (Beginning, Progressing, Proficient, Advanced) scale based off the current Zaner-Bloser rubric for quarter grades.

Beginning = 1	Progressing =2	Proficient = 3	Advanced = 4
Student writes with one or none of the Keys to Legibility (Shape, Size, Spacing, Slant) at an acceptable level to make sure writing is easy to read.	Student writes with two Keys to Legibility (Shape, Size, Spacing, Slant) at an acceptable level to make sure writing is easy to read.	Student writes with three Keys to Legibility (Shape, Size, Spacing, Slant) at an acceptable level to make sure writing is easy to read.	Student writes with all Keys to Legibility (Shape, Size, Spacing, Slant) at an acceptable level to make sure writing is easy to read.

- K-5 Writing: Writing will be the students' ability to follow the writing process to develop samples in formats such as expository, narrative, persuasive and descriptive.

Beginning	Progressing	Proficient	Advanced
Spelling, punctuation, and grammar is rarely used correctly. Student rarely has a clear topic and supporting details. Student rarely fulfills requirements of writing assignment.	Spelling, punctuation, and grammar is sometimes used correctly. Student sometimes has a clear topic and supporting details. Student sometimes fulfills requirements of writing assignment.	Spelling, punctuation, and grammar is mostly used correctly. Student usually has a clear topic and supporting details. Student mostly fulfills requirements of writing assignment.	Spelling, punctuation, and grammar is always used correctly. Student always has a clear topic and supporting details. Student always fulfills requirements of writing assignment.

- 21st Century Skills: Students will demonstrate an appropriate skill development and work ethic in the classroom setting as based on the skills listed below.

3 - 5 Rubric	Beginning	Progressing	Proficient	Advanced
Creativity & Innovation	Rarely - communicates ideas -open to a variety of ideas -handles challenges inappropriately	Sometimes -communicates ideas with others -open to a variety of ideas -handles challenges inappropriately	Most of the time -communicates new ideas with others -open to a variety of ideas -handles challenges appropriately	Always -effectively communicates new ideas with others open to a variety of ideas -creates and encourages other to share new ideas -takes risks and learns from

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				mistakes
Problem Solving	Rarely - solves different kinds of problems in both conventional and innovative ways	Sometimes - solves different kinds of problems in both conventional and innovative ways	Most of the time - solves different kinds of problems in both conventional and innovative ways	Always - solves different kinds of problems in both conventional and innovative ways
Communication & Collaboration	Rarely - articulates thoughts and ideas using expected communication skills in a variety of forms. -demonstrates listening skills	Sometimes - articulates thoughts and ideas using expected communication skills in a variety of forms. -demonstrates listening skills for multiple situations	Most of the time - articulates thoughts and ideas using oral, written, and non-verbal communication skills in a variety of forms. -demonstrates listening skills for multiple situations	Always - articulates thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written, and non-verbal communication skills in a variety of forms. -effectively demonstrates listening skills for multiple situations
Flexibility & Adaptability	Rarely - accepts change even with guidance - accepts feedback in a positive way and may create significant negative behavior	Sometimes - needs guidance to change and may experience behavior problems - accepts feedback in a negative way	Most of the time - adapts to change without prompting or behavior problems - accepts feedback with a positive attitude	Always - willingly adapts to change without prompting or behavior problems - accepts feedback and makes positive behavior changes
Initiative & Self-Direction	Rarely - works independently - stays on task - uses time effectively without redirections - demonstrates evidence of learning from mistakes	Sometimes - works independently and needs redirections - needs redirections to use time effectively - demonstrates evidence of learning from mistakes	Most of the Time - works independently - uses time effectively - applies previous learning to guide future decisions	Always - works independently - goes beyond basic expectations when using time - reflects on prior knowledge to make informed decisions
Social & Cross-Cultural Skills	Rarely - knows when to listen and when to speak -is respectful to peers and adults -sensitive to cultural differences	Sometimes - struggles to know when to listen and when to speak -needs reminders to be respectful to peers and/or adults -needs reminders to be tolerant of cultural differences	Most of the Time - knows when to listen and when to speak -is respectful to peers and adults -tolerant of cultural differences, ideas, values	Always - knows when to listen and when to speak -is respectful to peers and adults -embraces cultural differences, ideas, values
Productivity and Accountability	Rarely -stays on task -completes tasks on time -works independently	Sometimes -needs redirections to stay on task -is unable or unwilling to complete tasks on	Most of the Time -stays on task -completes tasks on time -works without	Always - stays on task -completes tasks early -works without disturbing others

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	-able to participate and work in group learning situations - is prepared and organized with materials -ready to learn	time -is distracting to others -needs guidance on how to participate in a group -is prepared and organized with materials -ready to learn	disturbing others -participates and works well in group learning situations -is prepared and organized with materials -ready to learn	-is a positive role model and contributing group member in learning situations -is prepared and organized with materials -ready to learn
Leadership & Responsibility	Rarely -shows evidence of leadership within the school community -chooses to accept leadership roles	Sometimes -shows evidence of leadership within the school community -chooses to accept leadership roles	Most of the Time -shows evidence of leadership within the school community -chooses to accept leadership roles	Always -shows evidence of leadership within the school community -chooses to accept leadership roles -Leads with the interest of others
Information Media Technology	Rarely -uses technology as a tool to research, organize, and evaluate information -uses technology appropriately	Sometimes -uses technology as a tool to research, organize, and evaluate information -uses technology appropriately	Most of the Time -uses technology as a tool to research, organize, and evaluate information -uses technology appropriately	Always -uses technology as a tool to research, organize, and evaluate information -uses technology appropriately

Homework:

Homework will:

- Be defined as practice of skills already taught.
- Be vital to mastery of skills and the learning process.
- Be included in high school grade composition, up to 10% of the final grade, as determined by departments.

Examples:

- Practice will be consistently aligned to learning by grade level and/or departments.
- In grades K-5, if practice is completed outside of classroom time, it will not be reflected in the gradebook.
- Practice demonstrates students' ability to apply their knowledge to the outcomes being assessed.
- Timely feedback will be provided on completed practice.
- Assessment of practice may be reflected in the gradebook through the use of homework quizzes as bell ringers, morning work, etc.
- Reading may be assigned as homework, but reading logs will not be reflected as a grade. A grade may be awarded for completion of AR tests.

Longitudinal educational research has provided evidence to suggest that an average of 10 minutes of practice per grade level outside of class per school night is an appropriate expectation for nearly all students. Students enrolled in Honors, AP, or Dual Enrollment courses may experience exceptions to these recommended time averages. Students with Individual Education Plans (IEP) or 504 Plans may have adjusted assignments to meet the recommended time averages. Educators will work together in Bennington Public Schools to promote this average standard for practice.

For examples....

- Grade 3 = 30 minutes (on average) of practice total (all subjects)
- Grade 7 = 70 minutes (on average) of practice total (all classes)
- Grade 11 = 110 minutes (on average) of practice total (all classes)

Honors, AP, Dual Enrollment Courses' Homework

Honors, AP, and Dual Enrollment courses will require more homework than other courses in the general curriculum. Homework assignments often require extended time and long-range planning as assignments may include reading a book, writing a paper, completing a project, or preparing a presentation. Students should also plan for study, review, and class preparation on a daily basis; this means, there may not be a specific homework assignment, but there is daily work to be done for these types of courses. Homework expectations and grading will be specifically described in the course syllabus.

Participation as the Learning Objective

When expressly stated in the desired learning objective, participation as assessed formatively or summatively is acceptable to be included in a student's grade. In physical education courses, it is even acceptable to include the formative and summative assessment of behaviors in the form of sportsmanship in a student's grade.

Re-Takes

Being allowed to engage in re-take processes are to be regarded as a privilege for students in Bennington Public Schools. In Bennington Public Schools, students are obligated to meet the high expectations of teachers, administrators, their parents, and the community.

No re-taking/re-doing of semester final exams, projects, or performances will be allowed.

As determined by departments /grade levels, students who do not meet desired outcomes on certain assignment or assessments will have an opportunity to complete work and/or to prepare and engage in the re-take process. Teachers will provide guidance for students on how to go about completing tasks and/or re-learning. Once students have provided evidence of re-learning to the teacher's satisfaction, then the teacher will accept the late work and/or provide the opportunity of one re-take per assignment. Additional opportunities may be possible with principal involvement.

- Departments/grade levels will have professional discretion to determine a reasonable time frame during which late work will be accepted and/or re-takes will be allowed.
- Departments/grade levels will have professional discretion to determine the appropriate content and format of re-takes, including number of opportunities, etc..
- Teachers will allow full credit for re-takes of department/grade level determined formative and summative assessments.

Building administrators will support teachers and students in this process by monitoring students who are not performing up to desired expectations, by requiring them to complete assignments, and by requiring them to re-take assessments after showing evidence of re-learning. As the grade level of the student increases, this administratively-led process will infringe upon students' desired use of their time--after school, Saturday mornings, pulled from athletics or activities, etc.

Make-Up Work Due to Absences

No matter what the reason, if a student has missed any type of schoolwork, the course assignments must be made up in a manner acceptable to the teacher. Students can be required to take tests or turn in assignments as soon as they return to school if they had been assigned prior to the absence. School Board Policy #503.03 states that it is the responsibility of the student to complete the work missed. The student shall receive full credit for the work missed unless the absence is deemed a truancy. The date make-up work is due will be determined by the teacher based on the content studied and length of absence. Ordinarily, the student will be expected to complete make-up work issued due to short-term absences (five days or less) within five days after returning to school.

When a student has been suspended from school or has an unexcused absence, they will be required to turn in make-up work. Extensive make-up work will be contracted in writing. Requests for assignments will be handled through the classroom teacher.

Issuance of a Zero

A zero is acceptable for an incomplete assignment after the student has been provided multiple opportunities to complete the work. An incomplete will be recorded in the gradebook until the work is completed and turned in for grading. After completion, the incomplete will be changed to reflect the grade of the completed work. If work is not completed, then the incomplete zero will remain in the gradebook and will be reflected in the student's final grade.

When an incomplete is issued to a student, the following steps will be taken:

- communication with student/parent that the assignment is now considered incomplete and will remain this way in the grade book until the work is submitted.
- communication of opportunities to complete the assignment will be given to the student.

- this communication will include: timeline, expectation for completion, and resources for reteaching or support provided by the teacher/school outside of the academic day if needed.

The following opportunities may be assigned as a resource for reteaching and support:

- lunch time study center
- after school study center
- before or after school (discretion of teacher and availability)
- guided study period
- directed study hall
- student support time
- Saturday school

Group Grades

An individual student's grade should always reflect what the individual student knows and is able to do. Teachers must provide individual grades, based on specific criteria, for each student's contribution to any group work or project that is graded. Group grades must be clearly defined at the start of a project to show individual contributions and overall product quality. There must be a clear rationale why students will complete a project as a group.

Extra Credit

Extra credit in Bennington Public Schools may only come in the form of course/curriculum-based work. Extra Credit should not supplant the regular learning objectives, but be an opportunity for extended learning.

Extra credit should...

- be offered to all students.
- have a minimum impact on a student's *overall* quarter/semester grade.
- be in addition to required assignments.
- have a purpose more than merely to adjust grades.

Teachers and administrators will work together on ensuring grade level, department, and/or course consistency in offering and awarding extra credit.

Students with IEP/504 or Homebound Plans

Just as instruction and assessment may be accommodated and modified for students with identified special learning needs, so may grading procedures and composition of their overall grades. Therefore, grading guidelines in any Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), 504 Plan, or Homebound Plan will supersede those aforementioned in this document. It is incumbent upon any student's planning team to thoughtfully consider what will best meet the needs of each of these students. Please see the Special Education section that follows for further information and guidance.

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Special Education

1. A student's IEP team needs to determine whether grading accommodation or modifications are needed. If either will be made, then the IEP team must include those in the IEP. IEPs are updated annually, and must be followed using the dates on the IEP. If there is a modification in grading practices, a district grading form must be completed. Most students with identified special education needs require accommodations based on their IEP and should receive these consistently.
 - Accommodations are practices and procedures in the areas of presentation, response, setting, and timing/scheduling that provide equitable access during instruction and assessments for students with disabilities.
 - Accommodations do NOT change the level of curriculum for the student.
 - Examples include, but are not limited to, the following, as specified by the child's disability...
 - reading a test aloud or providing a graphic organizer to a student
 - increasing the font size of an assessment
 - providing a private assessment environment
 - providing additional time
 - providing flexible re-take opportunities
 - providing a scribe or note-taker
 - providing a shortened assignment
 - Modifications are practices that DO change, lower, or reduce level of curriculum.
 - Examples include, but are not limited to, the following, as specified by the child's disability...
 - assigning work and assessing on grade levels lower than in which the student's age puts him/her reducing the level of content on both assignments and assessments
 - basing a student's grade on modifications toward mastery of goals laid out in the IEP
 - Classroom teachers and special education teachers must collaborate on the best approach for individual students.
 2. Accommodations and modifications should be provided to students based on their IEP as determined by the IEP Team, for both daily work and assessments.
 3. Students receiving modifications should still be provided a challenging (for them) curriculum. When considering modifications, educators should continue to strive for rigor for each individual student.
 4. Parents should be fully apprised by a member of the IEP Team, as to how their students with special education needs are being graded.
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Students in Problem-Solving Team (PST) Process

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Students in the PST process should be receiving curriculum interventions and may receive accommodations prior to any future meetings or testing. Accommodations as determined and documented by the PST Team, that influence the grade need to be communicated with the parent as a component of follow-up to the PST meeting(s).

English Learners

Teachers will confer with the building/district's English Learner instructor and/or administrator to ensure these students are graded fairly and in ways that support rather than discourage them in their learning.

Transfer Students

Grades earned at a previous school should be evaluated alongside grades earned at the receiving school. On an individual basis, teachers will consult with administration and counseling staff concerning specifics from previous schools.

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