

# WPHS OUTCOME BASED GRADING PLAN

## Purpose

There are several reasons grounded in research that support moving to a standards or outcome based grading plan.

First, it helps more accurately represent the changes regarding teaching and learning that we have made. For example, each class has essential outcomes which students are supposed to master. However, in most classes, students can do very poorly on an outcome deemed essential and still receive a grade of A or B in the class because the grade is a mathematical average of all of the student's performance in all parts of the class. Hence, the student might be a whiz on three or four outcomes for the class and completely bomb another outcome but because the grade is an average, the student is able to "hide" his or her poor performance on an outcome that is essential. Using a grading system that only averages the student's performance allows him or her to hide non-proficiency on essential elements, and that looks at only the "total" instead of the "parts" is not focused on learning.

The move helps more accurately represent learning in a different way too. Many grading systems currently in place factor into the student's final grade compliance or behavior issues. While these are important parts of the student's performance in class, it can hardly be said that they are focused on essential outcomes. Moving to a standards or outcome based system still allows for these issues to be considered, but it separates them from the content. Therefore it more accurately reflects the performance of the student who has mastered the learning of the course but perhaps was not as diligent as desired in completing homework. Conversely, it also more accurately represents the student who may be a very hard worker and diligent completer of work but who has not quite mastered the content.

A third reason rooted in research that helps make the case for change is the idea that there must be consistency in grading throughout teams within a school and (especially being the size we are) throughout the school itself. While our efforts at being a professional learning community have promoted greater unity and consistency in many things, grading is one issue that has remained cloaked in isolation. If teams have the same essential outcomes, it makes sense that they should use the same grading criteria. If we are a professional learning community that collectively focuses on student learning, we should report and communicate that learning in a similar manner. Having teachers within the same team who grade on completely different criteria is a practice that is hindering our progression along the professional learning communities continuum. Even more disturbing, however, is that it is inequitable for students.

The most important reason to move to a standards or outcome based grading system, though, is that it helps ensure alignment among the crucial elements of instruction. We already plan according to our outcomes. We already teach according to our outcomes. We moved last year and will continue to progress this year in assessing based on our outcomes. Why not have the grades reflect the outcomes? This will help both students and parents better understand how the student's grade is based very closely on what the student has learned in the class. Marzano's research shows that if students see 1) how the learning

objectives are correlated to instruction, 2) how the learning objectives and instruction are correlated to assessment, and 3) how assessment is correlated to their grade then they are more likely to perform successfully on those assessments. If we are about results, then it is hard to ignore this research.

## Phase 1

The goal of Phase 1 is to introduce the concept of aligning grading and essential outcomes to teachers and students. In it, teachers continue using a points system but all assignments are put into a learning or behavioral category. Teachers continue to compute the final grade based on an average of all categories.

1. Teachers eliminate categories such as homework, quizzes, tests, notebook, and participation and replace them with categories that match their essential outcomes. For example, some categories in an English class would include...

- Learning Outcome—Writing Mastery
- Learning Outcome—Vocabulary
- Learning Outcome—Informational Reading
- Learning Outcome—Grammar Mastery
- Learning Outcome—Oral Communication

These categories would be labeled in Power School as Learning Outcomes because that phrase describes an academic goal of the class. All assignments given to students would need to be placed in one or more of these categories.

2. Within the categories described above, teachers would label assignments with further information. For example, an English teacher would enter an assignment into Power School as follows.

- Vocabulary Test, Unit 1 in the category of “Learning Outcome—Vocabulary.”
- Rough Draft Persuasive Essay 1 in the category of “Learning Outcome—Writing Mastery.”
- Appositives and Gerunds in Class Assignment in the category of “Learning Outcome—Grammar Mastery.”

In other words, the assignment and the type of assignment are both stated in the title of the assignment as it is entered into Power School.

3. In addition to the categories listed in item 1, teachers create categories in which behavioral issues can be addressed. For example...

- Behavioral Outcome—Participation
- Behavioral Outcome—Timeliness of Work
- Behavioral Outcome—Working with Others

These categories and others like them are in place because they are important for students to learn, but must be separated from the essential content of the course.

4. In Phase 1, teachers still grade students on a points based scale, calculating the final grade as a percentage out of 100. Teams must determine how much to weight each

of the categories. For example, the English Team may decide that each category has a weight of 1, meaning in the scenario presented above, with 8 total categories, each category would be worth 1/8 of the final grade. Alternatively, the English Team may decide that certain outcomes are worth more than others. For example...

- Learning Outcome—Writing Mastery 30%
- Learning Outcome—Vocabulary 10%
- Learning Outcome—Informational Reading 20%
- Learning Outcome—Grammar Mastery 20%
- Learning Outcome—Oral Communication 10%
- Behavioral Outcome—Participation 4%
- Behavioral Outcome—Timeliness of Work 3%
- Behavioral Outcome—Working with Others 3%

The important thing, however, is that the entire team needs to agree upon the preceding breakdown.

5. Report cards are revised to include the final grade as well as a breakdown of students' performance in each of the categories.

## Phase 2

The purpose of Phase 2 is to transition toward a rubric based grading system and away from a percentage based system. The rubric based system is designed to help students know what is necessary to meet and exceed the standard. It is designed to measure students' learning rather than measuring their compliance in completing assignments.

Goals of Phase 2 include the following.

1. A more accurate correlation between the student's learning and the student's grade. In other words, the student's grade is a point on a continuum of learning from low to high which is then assigned a number. This is different than the total points system where the grade is based on a mathematical percentage.
2. A more equitable mathematical distribution when calculating final grades. In other words, there is the same amount of space between an A and B as there is between a D and an F.
3. A better understanding among parents, students, and teachers as to what grades actually mean therefore allowing for better consistency from teacher to teacher and class to class.
4. And most importantly, a deeper awareness on the part of students regarding the skills and performances needed to improve and excel.

Consider the following scenarios. Student A is obsessed with earning an A in her Biology 2 class. She works diligently to complete all worksheets, assignments, labs, and requirements. Her focus is on doing whatever is necessary to earn an A. However, despite her eagerness, Student A is unable to demonstrate any deeper thinking. While she answers all of the simpler questions correctly on assignments, she cannot respond thoughtfully to the questions requiring analysis and evaluation. Moreover, when completing the labs the teacher

assigns, Student A is able to carry out the tasks to the letter but struggles responding to the culminating questions that require her to synthesize her learning. On a traditional grading scale, Student A would probably earn an A because she is a hard worker who completes tasks. But has she learned the content? Has she learned to perform the thinking skills that are part of WPHS's School Improvement Plan and are necessary in real life? Can she complete the skills relevant to science that demonstrate her mastery of the content? The rubric system is designed to give Student A feedback on her performance in connection with these desired skills instead of simply completion of assignments.

Contrast Student A with Student B. Student B is concerned about his learning but learns at a pace that is slower than that of other students. Because he works more slowly than other students, he sometimes does not complete assignments by the due date. This causes his teachers to assign 0s. When Student B does finally "get it" he "gets it" thoroughly. He makes connections to the real world, demonstrates deep thinking skills by making and defending arguments, and performs expected skills with thoroughness and thoughtfulness. By this time, though, his grade is usually so low that his motivation to actually demonstrate the fact that he "gets it" is non-existent. On a traditional grading system, Student B would probably earn a D or worse because his non-completion of assignments early in the semester is difficult to recover from. But has he learned the content? Has he learned to perform the thinking skills that are part of WPHS's School Improvement Plan and are necessary in real life? Can he complete the skills relevant to the course that demonstrate his mastery of the content? The rubric system is designed to give Student B feedback on his performance as the semester progresses. Because a 0 on a 4 point scale is less punitive than a 0 on a 100 point scale, Student B can still earn a grade that is consistent with his skill level instead of one that punishes him for learning at a slower pace.

What does this mean for students?

1. Students must internalize the learning outcomes for their classes. Their focus must shift from day to day smaller type tasks to the bigger picture. This is not to say that the day to day smaller type tasks are unimportant as they of course help the student see the bigger picture. However, they must, with the assistance of their teachers, make the connections to how daily assignments affect their **learning** rather than their **grade**. If students' focus becomes that of learning the outcomes, their grades will follow automatically.
2. Students must internalize the school wide rubric. This rubric helps them understand at what levels they must perform in earning the grades desired. Better students will need to demonstrate their thinking at deep levels rather than regurgitating information. Struggling students will need to focus on refining and practicing their skills in order to get to the next level.

What does this mean for parents?

1. Parents must understand that the grade on this system will be more closely correlated to their students' learning. Consider Student D. Student D has fallen behind in his Algebra 1 class. In the past, Student D could have gone back and completed four or five missing homework assignments, turned them in to his teacher, and probably have his grade move from a low D to a B. In the meantime, however, because Student D rushed his way through completing this missing work just to get his parents off of his back, he learned very little. In the new system, Student D's grade

is not necessarily correlated by turning in those missing assignments. Rather, it is computed by determining what he has learned in completing those assignments. Once he has demonstrated his learning at the desired point on the rubric, his grade will come up.

What does this mean for teachers?

1. Additional thought must be given to assessment, especially formative assessment. Assessments and/or assignments must be crafted in a way that allows students to demonstrate the items specified by the rubric. For example, a math assessment might have a total of six problems. The first four might be basic knowledge, lower level skill “Quadrant A” problems. Students’ successful completion of these problems, though, would probably only place them at a 2 or 2.5 on the rubric. To earn a 3, students would have to complete a problem that requires analysis or synthesis, perhaps some application, and the demonstration of skill development. To earn a 4, students would have to complete a problem that requires evaluation, demonstration of knowledge beyond that which was taught in class, or mastery of skill development. (See the official rubric for more information.) In summary, thought and attention to effective assessment principles which have been a topic of study for more than four years at WPHS must be put into place.

2. Essential outcomes must be written in language that is understandable for students and parents. The goal is to help students know how they are progressing in connection with the learning outcomes. That means they must be free from as much jargon as possible, clear, and concise. On Power Teacher, each essential outcome must be addressed as outlined in the example below from the English Team.

- Learning Outcome—Writing Mastery 30%
- Learning Outcome—Vocabulary 10%
- Learning Outcome—Informational Reading 20%
- Learning Outcome—Grammar Mastery 20%
- Learning Outcome—Oral Communication 10%
- Behavioral Outcome—Participation 4%
- Behavioral Outcome—Timeliness of Work 3%
- Behavioral Outcome—Working with Others 3%

These are the learning outcomes for **all** of the English teachers and each teacher has the same weighting. In addition, each English teacher must include the actual language of the learning outcome in Power Teacher so that students and parents can access the description through the provided hyperlink. Moreover, the names of assignments input into Power Teacher must be ones that make some type of sense to students and parents. In other words, naming assignments “Quiz 1, Quiz 2” etc. is not specific enough.

3. Grades must still be input on a weekly basis. This is a requirement for all teachers. Better communication with students and parents is one of the goals of this project. Therefore, inputting grades in a consistent and timely fashion is imperative and non-negotiable. Assessments, assignments, and projects must still be input every week. Again, communication is a goal of this project and this communication must be available for both students and parents in a timely and accurate fashion.

4. Teachers must ensure that all assignments, assessments, projects, etc. are specifically linked to at least one of their course's learning outcomes.
5. Teachers must internalize the school wide rubric to the point where they understand both the theory and the practice. They must be intimately familiar with this document and its contents. They must be able to patiently help parents and students understand the purposes and benefits to the system.

### Phase 3

Phase 3's goal is to revisit the research, practices, and strategies we have learned previously that help us 1) Better connect students' grades with their learning, 2) Promote high levels of learning among all students, 3) Involve students in owning their learning and grades, 4) Assess students in meaningful ways that demonstrate their learning and thinking, and 5) Promote responsibility and effective work habits.

1. The system is designed to connect students' grades more to the learning outcomes than the overall grade. To what degree is this occurring? How can we focus more on the learning outcomes as opposed to the overall grade?
  - *Each teacher posts learning outcomes in rooms.*
  - *Each advisors print Learning Outcome Reports on Wednesdays instead of Quick Lookups.*
  - *Students take outcome reports to class all day Wednesday and Thursday morning. Each teacher spends a few moments checking in with the class as a whole to determine where intervention is needed.*
  - *Every assessment is tied explicitly to learning outcomes in a way that is obvious to students.*
  
2. The system is designed to promote a mindset of stretching rather than a mindset of just getting by. To what degree is this occurring? How can we better encourage and support stretching and growth?
  - *Students must attain Cs to earn credit. Remember C is defined as approaching the standard. Included in this "raising the bar" is an understanding that we must provide the support for this to occur. We cannot view this as a "way to trip students up." We must view it (and communicate this view) as a higher standard that will include additional support for students.*
  - *Intervention must occur when a student's grade slips below B- in any outcome. This can be initiated as students take their outcome reports around to classes on Wednesday.*
  - *Students must be held accountable for the learning in a way that ensures that they are learning and not blowing off assessments and other learning activities. This means each teacher must be familiar with the Intervention Flowchart and follow through with Tutoring. (Wednesdays are already designated for Teacher Tutoring and the Tutoring Room is open morning, lunch, and after school.)*
  - *Each teacher must constantly reinforce our vision of all students learning at high levels. Just passing is just not good enough!*

3. The system is designed to facilitate discussion between students and teachers regarding how to improve. Grades are supposed to be fluid and changing as students receive feedback on the quality of their work and how to increase their learning. Feedback is specific and focused on helping students learn more deeply. To what degree is this occurring? How can we better focus on communicating with our students regarding their learning? What tools can we use in instruction to facilitate communication about learning?
  - *Clear performance standards must be articulated through rubrics that are developed with student assistance.*
  - *Feedback must be given verbally and through the written words so that students know where and how to improve.*
  - *Assessments and assignments must be returned promptly so that when students re-do or fix assignments, learning is still possible. Waiting until the end of the semester only promotes mediocrity.*
  - *Models must be used in classrooms.*
  
4. The system is designed to work best with frequent, formative assessments utilizing questions of different levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Frequent assessments show the teacher students' progress. Formative assessments are used as part of the learning process. The rubric is based on Bloom's Taxonomy and is designed to elicit deeper thinking from students. To what degree are these things occurring?
  - *Regular assessment must take place.*
  - *Results must be communicated to students clearly and in a timely fashion.*
  - *Assessments must be small and purposeful, isolating fewer key concepts at deeper levels.*
  - *Assessments must be thoughtfully developed. The same assessments that worked on the old system won't work on this one.*
  
5. The system is designed to promote responsibility and effective work habits, not to promote laziness and procrastination. To what degree is this occurring? How can we hold students accountable for their learning while understanding that learning is the most important objective?
  - *Students must be held accountable for the learning in a way that ensures that they are learning and not blowing off assessments and other learning activities. This means each teacher must be familiar with the Intervention Flowchart and follow through with Tutoring. (Wednesdays are already designated for Teacher Tutoring and the Tutoring Room is open morning, lunch, and after school.)*
  - *Advisors print Learning Outcome Report every week and students take it to their classes through the day. Teachers spend five minutes helping students review their grades in each outcome and where improvement is needed.*
  - *Flowchart of Interventions is used regularly and in a timely fashion.*



## WHITE PINE HIGH SCHOOL OUTCOME BASED GRADING RUBRIC

Rubric Scale	Letter Grade	Achievement Level	Information	Thinking	Skills
4	A	Exceeding Standard	I make in depth inferences, applications, and connections beyond those explicitly taught in class.	I demonstrate thinking at the <b>Synthesize</b> or <b>Evaluate</b> levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.	I perform the desired skill at a level that demonstrates mastery completely independent of coaching.
3.5	A-	Almost Exceeding Standard	I make in depth inferences, applications, and connections beyond those explicitly taught in class with partial success.	I attempt thinking at the <b>Synthesize</b> or <b>Evaluate</b> levels of Bloom's Taxonomy with partial success.	I perform the desired skill at a level that indicates partial mastery. Minimal coaching is necessary.
3	B	Meeting Standard	I demonstrate proficiency regarding the information taught in class with no major errors or omissions.	I demonstrate thinking at the <b>Analyze</b> or <b>Synthesize</b> levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.	I perform the desired skill at a level that indicates proficiency. Some coaching is necessary. With practice, I will achieve mastery.
2.5	B-	Almost Meeting Standard	I am close to demonstrating proficiency regarding the information taught in class and need only to make a few adjustments and clarifications.	I attempt thinking at the <b>Analyze</b> or <b>Synthesize</b> levels of Bloom's Taxonomy with partial success.	I perform the desired skill at a level that indicates partial proficiency. I am not yet proficient in all components of the desired skill. Coaching is helpful and needed.
2	C	Approaching Standard	I demonstrate proficiency regarding the simpler details and processes but have only partial knowledge of the more complex ideas and processes.	I demonstrate thinking at the Apply level of Bloom's Taxonomy.	I perform the desired skill at a level that is not yet proficient. I am approaching proficiency in all areas but have not yet achieved it in any. My errors are all minor. Coaching is regular.
1.5	C-	Almost Approaching Standard	I have partial knowledge of the simpler details and processes but make major errors regarding more complex ideas and processes.	I attempt thinking at the Apply level of Bloom's Taxonomy with partial success.	I perform the desired skill at a level that is not yet proficient. My errors are both major and minor. Coaching is regular.
1	D <b>Not Yet</b>	Emerging	I need significant practice and refining in order to demonstrate proficiency regarding the information taught in class.	I demonstrate thinking at the Know level only on Bloom's Taxonomy.	I perform the desired skill at a level that suggests significant practice is needed to achieve proficiency. I have many errors. Coaching is nearly constant.
0.5	D- <b>Not Yet</b>	Emerging	I can, with help, demonstrate partial understanding of the simpler details and processes but not the more complex ones.	I attempt thinking at the Know level of Bloom's Taxonomy with partial success.	I attempt the desired skill with significant errors. Constant coaching is essential for any success.
0	F <b>Not Yet</b>	No Attempt	I make no attempt <b>OR</b> I am unable to demonstrate understanding even with help.	I make no attempt <b>OR</b> I am unable to demonstrate thinking at any level.	I make no attempt <b>OR</b> I am unable to demonstrate the desired skill even with coaching.

When I **evaluate** I can:

- Defend an idea
- Advocate for change
- Argue my point with evidence
- Judge and explain
- Criticize and explain
- Assess the merits of

When I **synthesize** I can:

- Put the parts together into a whole
- Connect different sets of ideas
- Combine
- Summarize into big ideas
- Relate past to present
- Show how events are related
- Compare and contrast

When I **analyze** I can:

- Break down
- Dissect
- Scrutinize
- Examine closely
- Inspect
- Divide into parts
- Contrast differences

## WHITE PINE HIGH SCHOOL OUTCOME BASED SIMPLIFIED GRADING RUBRIC

Rubric Scale	Letter Grade	Achievement Level	Information	Thinking	Skills
4	A	Exceeding Standard	I make in depth inferences, applications, and connections beyond those explicitly taught in class.	I demonstrate thinking at the Synthesize or Evaluate levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.	I perform the desired skill at a level that demonstrates mastery completely independent of coaching.
3	B	Meeting Standard	I demonstrate proficiency regarding the information taught in class with no major errors or omissions.	I demonstrate thinking at the Analyze or Synthesize levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.	I perform the desired skill at a level that indicates proficiency. Some coaching is necessary. With practice, I will achieve mastery.
2	C	Approaching Standard	I demonstrate proficiency regarding the simpler details and processes but have only partial knowledge of the more complex ideas and processes.	I demonstrate thinking at the Apply level of Bloom's Taxonomy.	I perform the desired skill at a level that is not yet proficient. I am approaching proficiency in all areas but have not yet achieved it in any. My errors are all minor. Coaching is regular.
1	D <b>Not Yet</b>	Emerging	I need significant practice and refining in order to demonstrate proficiency regarding the information taught in class.	I demonstrate thinking at the Know level only on Bloom's Taxonomy.	I perform the desired skill at a level that suggests significant practice is needed to achieve proficiency. I have many errors. Coaching is nearly constant.
0	F <b>Not Yet</b>	No Attempt	I make no attempt <b>OR</b> I am unable to demonstrate understanding even with help.	I make no attempt <b>OR</b> I am unable to demonstrate thinking at any level.	I make no attempt <b>OR</b> I am unable to demonstrate the desired skill even with coaching.

When I **evaluate** I can:

- Defend an idea
- Advocate for change
- Argue my point with evidence
- Judge and explain
- Criticize and explain
- Assess the merits of

When I **synthesize** I can:

- Put the parts together into a whole
- Connect different sets of ideas
- Combine
- Summarize into big ideas
- Relate past to present
- Show how events are related
- Compare and contrast

When I **analyze** I can:

- Break down
- Dissect
- Scrutinize
- Examine closely
- Inspect
- Divide into parts
- Contrast differences

