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621 – GRADING AND REPORTING OF PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish grading and reporting practices that reflect a student's academic achievement of the course standards.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

It is the Detroit Lakes Public School District's responsibility to ensure grades represent an accurate measure of each student's level of achievement pertaining to established local, state or national standards and the essential learning outcomes related to those standards. For this reason, the District shall establish a clear and accurate system of grading student achievement and shall provide students, parents, teachers, and the community with reports that accurately reflect this information.

The Detroit Lakes Public Schools supports a system of guiding principles for clear and accurate grading and reporting policies and procedures. To achieve these goals, the grading and reporting system must

- reflect academic achievement;
- contain meaningful feedback;
- be honest, fair, transparent, credible, useful and user friendly;
- be criterion referenced;
- align with school board approved Detroit Lakes Public Schools curriculum;
- reflect consistency within and among courses, grade levels, departments, and/or schools;
- communicate in a clear and timely manner information to parties;
- reflect high expectations of all students across all courses and programs; and be developmentally appropriate for all students.

III. DEFINITIONS

Accommodation: a change that does not alter the rigor of the standard. Examples include large print materials, extended testing time, and small group administration.

Assessments: multiple tools used to gather information about the student's performance on the standards taught.

Benchmark: a clear, specific description of knowledge or skills the student should acquire by a particular point in the student's schooling.

Course Syllabus: a document given to students and parents at the start of each course that reflects the course's planning. A teacher's course syllabus should include a general description of the course, any textbooks(s) or other learning materials that will be used and needed, a listing of the course's Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs), a general course calendar listing anticipated summative assessment dates, and general expectations of the teacher related to attendance and class participation. Each course syllabus must be approved by the building principal.

Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA): the student's numerical average for all courses taken. It is computed by adding the total number of the letter grades' point values and dividing it by the number of credits completed.

Curriculum: a written plan including standards, benchmarks, essential questions, an assessment plan, instructional resources and strategies, and time allocations for emphasis and pacing for the content to be taught.

Essential Learning Outcome (ELO): statements that describe significant and essential learning that learners will need to achieve and reliably demonstrate following instruction. All courses in the Detroit Lakes Public Schools will center around the most important skills, knowledge and/or attitudes that the learner should be able to demonstrate following instruction in that course.

Formative Assessments (Academic Practice): work conducted when a student is still learning the material. It is an assessment that is designed to provide direction for both students and teachers. For the students, the adjustment may mean reviewing, additional practice, or confirmation that they are ready to move forward. For the teachers, it may mean changing instructional strategies, providing additional practice, or being ready to move forward. (e.g. teacher observation, quizzes, homework, rough drafts, peer editing, or notebook checks).

Grade (to): the act of evaluating a student's academic achievement based on a set criteria and the assignment of a grade to it.

Grade (the): a number or letter indicating a student's level of achievement relative to the grading scale.

Grade Weighting: the assignment of a greater value to a letter grade's numeric point value to reward a student for completing coursework of a substantially higher rigor (Advanced Placement and College in the Classroom courses).

Grading Scale: a description of what grades represent relative to the percentage of the student's mastery of subject goals.

Grading Syllabus: a document given to students and parents at the start of each year or course that outlines the grading criteria and procedures, as well as a list of summative

assessments that will be included. A grading syllabus may be included in a course's main syllabus.

Homework: includes learning tasks, assigned to students by teachers, for the following purposes:

- to allow students to practice and master concepts learned in the classroom;
- to prepare student for new learning by utilizing past learned knowledge or experience;
- to extend learning by allowing students to expand upon what they've learned; and
- as an assessment to shape further learning.

Instruction: a teacher-led process, which transforms well-planned curriculum into student learning. Instruction is standards-focused teaching for the purpose of providing meaningful learning experiences that enable all students to master academic content and achieve personal goals.

Modification: a substantive change that alters the standard or the rigor of the standard.

Participation: class participation can take many forms, but generally would refer to those behaviors that students exhibit during instruction that involve listening respectfully, being prepared, making appropriate comments that are based on the assignment, and making appropriate comments that refer to the thoughts of other students.

Reporting: the communicating of a student's achievement to the student and parents as well as other agencies, such as employers and post-secondary institutions, in accordance with applicable school board policies.

Standard: a statement of what the student will be able to know, understand and do.

Summative Assessments (Academic Achievement): work conducted when a student has had adequate instruction and practice to be responsible for the material. It is designed to provide information to be used in making judgment about a student's achievement at the end of a sequence of instruction, e.g. final drafts/attempts, tests, exams, assignments, projects, performances.

Term Grade Point Average (GPA): the student's numerical average for a given term (quarter, trimester, or semester). It is computed by adding the total number of the letter grades' point values and dividing it by the number of credits for a given term.

IV. GRADING PARAMETERS

- A. The primary purpose of grading is to determine the level of achievement of students related to essential learning expectations. Additional purposes for grading include
1. providing information to the students, their families, employers, and post-secondary institutions.

2. providing information that students can use for self-evaluation.
3. providing information that teachers can use to modify planning and instruction.
4. evaluating the effectiveness of instructional programs.

B. General Grading Parameters

1. All elementary grade levels and secondary level sections of the same course will apply the grading parameters that follow in the same manner. Examples: 1) each teacher of the same course/grade level must set the summative assessment criteria at the same level; and 2) each teacher of the same course must have the same expectations and practices relating to reassessment.
2. Course/class grades will accurately reflect the level of a student's achievement. As such, individual student achievement will be based on measures that are related specifically to learning or achievement. Examples of factors that would be considered "non-academic" and should not be included in grades include, but are not limited to
 - a student's social development and work habits,
 - behavior and participation in class,
 - attendance,
 - violations of academic honesty policies (cheating, plagiarism, collusion)
 - group scores,
 - parent signatures,
 - planner checks,
 - neatness, or
 - homework or other tasks based solely on completion without any form of feedback being provided to the student.

While non-academic factors are highly valued and often contribute to the student's level of achievement, they should be reported separately from an achievement grade. Merging assessment evidence with these factors masks essential learning and contributes to miscommunication about the student's level of achievement.

Performance-based classes (such as choir, band, physical education, "shop" or lab-based classes) may include participation in grades, with administrative approval, in their grading if it is part of the course's essential learning outcomes.

3. The grade for a course may be calculated solely on summative assessments or it may be calculated based on a combination of summative and formative assessments.
 - a. Elementary report cards and grades will be based on assessments of student achievement related to the Minnesota State Standards and essential learning outcomes established for each grade level.
 - b. Grading at the secondary level will be based off of the combinations of all summative and formative assessments. The following calculations provide a

framework for grades 6-12.

- 1) formative assessment grades will count for a maximum of 15% a student's grade in a term (quarter, trimester, semester, etc.). Summative assessment grades will count for a minimum of 85%.
 - 2) Individual departments will determine what assessments are included in the formative assessment and summative assessment categories.
4. Extra credit opportunities are limited strictly to additional work which provides extended learning opportunities that directly match essential learning outcomes. When a teacher chooses to use extra credit to evaluate student academic achievement, the opportunity must be offered to all students.
 5. All assessments (formative and summative) must be relevant and aligned to established course standards and essential learning outcomes. For this reason, students are expected to complete all assigned work. As a last resort, students may receive a finalized grade of zero on the assessment if all efforts (including parental contact) to have the student complete the assessment within a reasonable time frame have been exhausted. Teachers will establish late-work and reassessment policies and procedures that align with this policy and receive administrative approval in the syllabus of each course they teach.
 6. To accurately reflect a student's level of achievement for a single assessment, multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning must be provided (reassessing). Additionally, to ensure that a student's level of learning is reflected throughout the course, a sufficient number of assessments is necessary.
 7. If modifications to rigor and/or standards cause course work to be altered, the assessment and reporting system may reflect modifications. Such modifications would typically result from accommodations relating to students on Individual Education Plans (IEP) or Section 504 Plans in accordance with the respective rules and procedures that guide both programs.

V. GRADING SCALE AND SYMBOL DEFINITIONS

In order to calculate grades for grade levels or specific courses, the principal of each school level (elementary, middle school and high school) will recommend to the Superintendent and School Board grading scales and symbol definitions that meet the needs of the school level and are aligned to the tenets of this policy. These grading scales and symbol definitions will be published in each school's student handbook and will also be included in each course's syllabus.

VI. HIGH SCHOOL TRANSCRIPTS AND TRANSCRIPTION PROCEDURES

A transcript is the official educational record for a student and includes, along with other data, the grades received in each course that is taken for credit for the purpose of acquiring a diploma. Because Detroit Lakes Public Schools recognizes that students are able to earn

and accumulate academic credits in a variety of ways and from a variety of sources, procedures will be designed to ensure consistent and accurate transcription of grade records. Specifically, these procedures will define the how credits will be earned in the following situations:

- when grades are earned in the schools of the District;
- when grades are earned in settings outside district authority (other high schools, home schools, post-secondary institutions, and special programs such that are credentialed to assign school grades); and
- when grades are weighted for college-level courses offered at Detroit Lakes High School.

These procedures will be published in the high school student handbook and will be approved annually by the Detroit Lakes School Board.

VII. COMMUNICATION

A shared understanding, between the District staff, students and parents, of the Detroit Lakes Public Schools' grading and reporting system is essential for effective communication. In order for all parties to understand and trust the student achievement data, the district will provide all parties with the following:

- A clear purpose for the grading and reporting system;
- A common grading syllabus for all courses;
- A valid and accurate assessment of the student's achievement;
- Timely reporting;
- A comprehensive and multifaceted reporting system (i.e. conferences, phone calls, electronic messages, classroom websites, report cards, mid-term reports) and clear explanation of all symbols used.

VIII. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development program is necessary to enhance a teacher's ability to deliver high quality instruction and to design and use assessments that are purposeful, assess appropriate learning targets, and to assign grades consistent with this policy. To ensure this goal, the professional development program must be focused on the two themes of assessing accurately and using assessment to benefit students, not merely to grade and sort them. Teachers must understand the relationship between assessments and student motivation and craft assessment experiences to maximize motivation.

Professional development activities must be an integral part of broad school-wide and District-wide educational improvement goals. Effective professional development must be school-based, collaborative, and differentiated in its delivery.

District and site professional development plans for effective classroom assessment and grading must include research-based training components of theory, demonstration, guided practice, feedback and coaching.

IX. AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

The School Board is accountable, in its governance capacity, for the instructional program and delegates responsibilities as follows:

- A. The Superintendent, through designees, shall be responsible for implementation and evaluation of the Grading and Reporting Policy and for development and implementation of procedures and practices for grading and reporting student achievement.
- B. Principals shall be responsible for assuring implementation of the District's beliefs, procedures and practices of effective grading and reporting.
- C. Teachers shall be responsible for effectively implementing classroom assessments and for applying the principles of effective grading and reporting practices.
- D. Parents are a vital link to successful home/school communication about student learning. Therefore, parents are strongly encouraged to participate in all available components of the Detroit Lakes Public Schools' grading and reporting system.
- E. Students are responsible for their own learning. All students shall actively participate in understanding the Detroit Lakes Public Schools' grading and reporting system. Students are able to use the formative assessment grade to identify strengths and weaknesses with a particular topic and, as a result, seek additional help. As well, students are able to know that the summative assessment grade reflects a true level of understanding of a particular topic/unit/course. This information can help the student plan for future course selection and post-secondary options.