

Grading Standards for Grades 6-12

Romeo Community Schools
Office of Curriculum and Instruction



Romeo Community Schools Mission Statement

To empower our students to excel in an ever-evolving world by engaging all members of the school community to ensure a quality and innovative education

Romeo Community Schools Belief Statements

We believe in...

accountability for all,
lifelong learning,
personal respect and responsibility,
respect for others,
demonstrating integrity,
fostering creativity and critical thinking,
educational excellence
the ability of all students to learn and succeed,
initiating and fostering individual learning,
providing a safe and supportive environment,
collaborative efforts among students, staff, parents and community,
fostering effective communication and employability skills,
demonstrating academic competencies,
being responsible citizens who make positive contributions at home,
at work, and in the global community

Romeo Community Schools Grading Standards for Grades 6-12

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SECTION 1: OVERVIEW

Of the many forms of communication between school and home, grades are one of the most important. They are used to communicate a student's progress, to help diagnose weaknesses in learning that need improvement, and to assist in planning for future education and careers. Consequently, our district is committed to constantly improving grading and reporting practices.

Two important priorities have emerged during our discussion about grading practices in the Romeo Community Schools:

- 1. There is a need to better link grading and reporting practices to the learning standards for a course or subject area.**
- 2. There is a need to employ consistent grading and assessment practices within and among grade levels, courses, departments and schools.**

Parents and students need clear and timely communication about progress toward meeting the learning standards for a course of study. Parents and students need to know, from year to year and teacher to teacher, what to expect in terms of grading and what the grades earned in a course really mean.

As a district, we are working to shift to a framework that balances the use of formative and summative assessments in order to promote increased student achievement. Formative assessment helps students understand exactly what they do and do not know in a particular content area. Summative assessment serves as a measure of understanding at the conclusion of learning. The grading practices outlined in this document support the expectation that students will be actively engaged in the learning process without risk of penalty for what they may not know at the beginning of a unit of study and while they practice and master skills during a unit of study. Instead, they will ultimately be assessed on what they know at the end of learning.

The Effective Grading Practices Study Group met throughout the year to research best practices and to engage in continued dialogue about effective grading practices (see Section 4 for a list of individual members that contributed to this process). The grading standards in this document were formulated with the central purpose of grading in mind: **to provide a fair and accurate reflection of a student's performance in a course or subject of study.**

SECTION 2: GRADING STANDARDS FOR GRADES 6-12

STANDARD 1 Grading practices should serve to provide accurate, specific and timely feedback designed to improve student performance.

The purpose of grading is to provide a fair and accurate reflection of a student's learning in a course of study. The evidence used to determine a grade must be accurate in order to communicate correctly about the student's learning. Timely and specific feedback is necessary to promote continued learning and growth.

STANDARD 2 Grading procedures shall be related directly to stated learning goals for the course.

A student's grade should reflect his or her mastery of the content standards established for the subject matter. Therefore, grading practices must be aligned to the standards and should not include other factors that are unrelated to the standards.

STANDARD 3 Individual achievement of the stated learning goals shall be the only basis for grades.

"Group grades" shall not be used to determine a student's grade. Only individual achievement of the learning standards will be the basis for grades.

STANDARD 4 Effort, participation, attitude and other behaviors shall not be included in grades, but shall be reported separately unless they are a stated part of the learning goal.

A student's behavior and attitude are very important components in the learning process. However, if the purpose of grading is to communicate a student's mastery of the learning standards, behavior and attitude should be handled outside of the grading process. Citizenship, behavior grades and a school's discipline policy are alternate ways that these factors can be managed in schools.

STANDARD 5 **Teachers may set due dates and deadlines for all marked work that will be part of student grades.**

Teachers have the freedom to establish due dates for work and will have discretion for marking late assignments. Care should be taken when marking late work so as not to distort a student's learning.

STANDARD 6 **Absent students shall be given make-up opportunities for all marked work that will be a part of student grades.**

Students that are absent shall be given appropriate opportunities to make up all marked work so as to avoid distorting a student's grade of what they have learned.

STANDARD 7 **Teachers will provide students and parents a written overview of grading for the course in clear, understandable language.**

At the beginning of each new course or semester changes of teacher, students and parents shall be provided a copy of the grading procedures for the course. Wherever possible, a teacher's grading procedures should be posted on their classroom web site.

STANDARD 8 **Extra credit will not be used in calculating a student's grade.**

Extra credit will no longer be used in calculating a student's grade because of the potential to artificially inflate a grade when real learning mastery of the course content has not yet happened.

STANDARD 9 **Retakes of formative assessments will be given at a time arranged between the teacher and student and only after corrective measures have been taken by the student to improve performance.**

A student shall be allowed to retake any formative assessment in order to improve their mastery of the course content. Any such retakes will be completed at a time agreed upon by the teacher and student and should not disrupt the learning process. Retakes shall be given only after an agreement has been made about what steps the student will take to improve his or her learning. See Appendix B for a sample of such a corrective agreement.

STANDARD 10

Summative assessments of a student's learning will count for 90% of the overall grade in a course. Formative assessments, daily practice and homework (when graded) will count for 10% of the overall grade.

When a student learns new material, he or she goes through a time of wrestling with the content before eventually mastering the information or skills. It is expected that a student will make some mistakes during the learning process. Work and assessments completed during this learning period are considered formative (assessment FOR learning). The purpose of formative assessment is not to judge a student's final mastery of a concept or skill, but to evaluate where he or she is in the learning process, diagnose any problems, and rethink teaching approaches so that the child can better master the content. Formative assessment can take many forms, including, but not limited to: quizzes, homework, first drafts of writing, teacher questions during instruction, use of student response systems during instruction, informal observation, pre-assessment at the beginning of a unit or entrance and exit slips. Practice of this type, if graded by the teacher, will count only 10% of a student's overall grade.

After a student has had sufficient instruction and practice on a concept, it is then reasonable to judge his or her mastery. Any work or assessment done at that point is considered to be summative assessment. The purpose of summative assessment is to evaluate how well a student has learned the material. Summative assessment can take many forms, including, but not limited to: tests (written or oral), student performance, quizzes, final drafts of student writing (term papers, essays, stories, etc.), projects and presentations.

Formative and summative assessments are NOT distinguished by the type of assessment. For example, homework is NOT always formative assessment, and quizzes are NOT necessarily summative assessment. The teacher must determine the purpose of the assignment and communicate with students whether it is formative (10%) or summative (90%). Assignments that are summative, such as lab reports, processed papers, and projects, may require time at home to complete.

Traditional written tests are merely one type of assessment that may be included in the student's overall grade. Students should be measured with a variety of assessment methods to take into account their individual strengths and weaknesses. Quality assessment includes "write, do, and say" opportunities, not just paper/pencil tests. We must recognize varied learning styles and address them in our assessment plans. The student who "isn't a great test-taker" must still have the opportunity to be successful in the classroom.

SECTION 3: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How were the grading guidelines developed?

A 16-person Effective Grading Practices Study Group, comprised of parents, teachers and administrators, was organized in September 2012 for the purpose of developing and implementing district-wide policies and practices that would ensure effective and consistent implementation of the assessment, grading, and reporting of students' learning. Meetings were held throughout the 2012-2013 school year, and a variety of resources were consulted.

2. Who served on the Effective Grading Practices Study Group?

Section 4 of this handbook includes a list of the individual members who were a part of the Effective Grading Practices Study Group.

3. Does research and/or literature support the guidelines?

Yes, members of the Effective Grading Practices Study Group consulted the works of many of the leading experts in the field of grading and assessment. Ken O'Connor's books were utilized for reference as well as articles from noted authors, including Rick Stiggins, Bob Marzano, Tom Guskey, Doug Reeves and Rick Wormeli. In addition, the extensive work on grading and assessment completed by the Urbana City Schools in Urbana, Ohio, was consulted.

4. Why were the grading guidelines developed?

The grading standards were developed for grades 6-12 in order to:

- Better link grading and reporting practices with district-wide curriculum, instruction and assessment.
- Increase consistency in grading and assessment throughout the classrooms in the secondary schools.
- Improve communication with parents, students, guidance counselors, other teachers, colleges, future employers, and more.
- Diagnose student weaknesses earlier and more accurately so that children can get the help they need.
- More accurately measure our students' mastery of the Common Core State Standards and Grade Level Content Expectations.

5. Why is consistency important?

The grading standards address certain core practices that need to be consistent throughout the district. Consistency in grading practices increases fairness for children. With consistent practices, it does not matter which school a child attends or which teacher he or she gets for a particular subject. Each child will know that he or she will get the same grade for the same work, regardless of the teacher. Consistency also improves communication. From teacher to teacher and year to year, grades will mean the same thing, which will help everyone involved understand the information being reported.

6. How do the grading guidelines improve communication?

Because the guidelines provide consistency in grading, the grades students earn will mean the same thing from teacher to teacher. For example, everyone will have a much better understanding and agreement on what an “A” means and what it takes to earn each grade. Communication is improved because what a grade means is made more specific. If a nine-weeks grade is a combination of achievement, effort, behavior, attitude, attendance, and more, it is nearly impossible to break apart the grade to understand the student’s individual strengths and weaknesses. Rather than combining all these factors, quarterly grades will come from a child’s mastery of the academic content of the class.

7. How can the grading and assessment guidelines help diagnose student weaknesses?

Grades will more accurately reflect what a student really knows since the grades will be determined primarily through summative assessment (assessment OF learning). Formative assessment (assessment FOR learning) and practice, such as homework, will have less effect on a student’s grade. Behavior, participation, and attitude will not be calculated into the grade at all, unless they are specifically part of the academic requirements for the course. Factors other than academic achievement can greatly impact a student’s grade to the point that it no longer accurately represents what the child knows or is able to do. If students’ grades are inappropriately inflated because of these other factors, weaknesses can be hidden by the increased grade so that they “fall through the cracks” and don’t get the help they really need. When a child’s grade accurately reflects what he or she knows, weaknesses can be found early and the child can get the help he or she needs before the problem increases.

8. Are the grading and assessment guidelines a big change for our school district?

Not necessarily. Some of our teachers have been following practices very similar to the guidelines for many years on their own. For others, the guidelines will foster a shift in their thinking about grading and assessment and what’s best for students.

9. What is formative assessment (assessment FOR learning)?

Whenever a student learns new material, he or she goes through a time of wrestling with the content before eventually mastering the information or skills. It is expected that a student will make some mistakes during the learning process. Work and assessments completed during this learning period are considered formative assessment (assessment FOR learning). The purpose of formative assessment is not to judge a student's final mastery of a concept or skill, but to evaluate where he or she is in the learning process, diagnose any problems, and rethink teaching approaches so that the child can better master the content. Formative assessment can take many forms, including, but not limited to: quizzes, homework, first drafts of writing, teacher questions during instruction, use of student response systems during instruction, informal observation, pre-assessment at the beginning of a unit or entrance and exit slips. Practice of this type, if graded by the teacher, will count only 10% of a student's grade.

10. What is summative assessment (assessment OF learning)?

After a student has had sufficient instruction and practice on a topic, concept, or skill, it is then reasonable to judge his or her mastery. Any work or assessment done at that point is considered to be summative assessment. The purpose of summative assessment is to evaluate how well a student has learned the material. Summative assessment can take many forms, including, but not limited to: tests (written or oral), student performance, quizzes, final drafts of student writing (term papers, essays, stories, etc.), projects and presentations.

11. How do you distinguish between formative assessment and summative assessment?

If a student is learning something for the first time, or is still in the early stages of learning the material, it is formative assessment. If a student has had sufficient instruction and practice on a topic to the point that it is fair to judge him or her on mastery of content, then it is summative assessment. You do NOT distinguish between formative assessment and summative assessment by the type of assessment it is. For example, homework is NOT always formative assessment, and quizzes are NOT necessarily summative assessment. Assignments that are summative in nature, such as lab reports, processed papers, and projects, may still require time at home to complete.

12. Why are formative assessment and summative assessment balanced differently in a student's overall grade?

Summative assessment obviously counts more than formative assessment. It is not fair for formative assessment to count more for a number of reasons. On one hand, if you grade a student's formative assessments for correctness, the grade will more than likely be incorrectly lowered. Formative assessment is utilized while a student is still learning

the material, and it is reasonable to expect mistakes. It is not fair to judge a student's mastery of material when he or she is still in the process of learning it. On the other hand, if you grade a summative assessment for completion only, the grade will more than likely be incorrectly raised. He or she would be getting a grade for merely completing required work. The fact that a student completes an assignment does not provide any useful information as to how well he or she learned the material. In summary, to serve as an accurate measure of what a student has truly learned, a quarterly grade must be based primarily on work that was actually graded for correctness and at a time when the student has had sufficient instruction and practice to be held responsible for the material. Therefore summative assessment counts more.

13. How was the 90% - 10% split determined?

The percentage split was decided upon by the Effective Grading Practices Study Group. Teachers are still becoming more comfortable with the use of formative assessment in their daily instruction. Moving forward in a gradual manner allows teachers the opportunity to grow and practice the active use of formative assessment. The committee arrived at a maximum of 10% for formative assessment as a value that would give reasonable weight to such work, not overly inflate or reduce a student's academic grade with non-achievement factors, and allow for consistency as teachers move forward with formative assessment.

14. Is it true that tests will now count for at least 90% of a student's grade?

No, this is not accurate. Summative assessment will count for 90% of a student's grade. Traditional written tests are merely one type of assessment that may be included in the student's overall grade. Students should be measured with a variety of assessment methods to take into account their individual strengths and weaknesses. Quality assessment includes "write, do, and say" opportunities, not just paper/pencil tests. We must recognize varied learning styles and address them in our assessment plans. The student who "isn't a great test-taker" must still have the opportunity to be successful in the classroom.

The Frequently Asked Questions and answers in this section are adapted from Urbana City Schools, in Urbana, Ohio.

SECTION 4: CONTRIBUTORS

The following individuals participated in the Effective Grading Practices Study Group during the 2012-2013 school year. Their many contributions to the process of defining the Romeo Community Schools Grading Standards for Grades 6-12 are greatly appreciated.

- **Shelley Bartolotta**, Romeo High School Parent
- **Carrie Brunner**, Powell Middle School Teacher
- **Kimberly Droope**, Romeo High School Teacher
- **Lena Dubia**, Romeo Middle School Teacher
- **Marianne Engstrom**, Powell Middle School Parent
- **Chris Giancarli**, Romeo Middle School Parent
- **Danielle Hart**, Powell Middle School Teacher
- **Jeff LaPerriere**, Powell Middle School Principal
- **Brad Martz**, Romeo Middle School Principal
- **Sean McBrady**, Macomb Intermediate School District Consultant
- **Andrea Page**, Romeo High School Teacher
- **Lisa Pfeil**, Romeo Middle School Parent
- **Dan Stevens**, Romeo High School Assistant Principal
- **Susan Stokes**, Romeo High School Parent
- **Eric Whitney**, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
- **Sue Ziel**, Romeo Middle School Teacher

Appendix A

Mid-Year Report from the Effective Grading Practices
Study Group

Grades 6-12 Effective Grading Practices Study Group
Romeo Community Schools
Mid-Year Report
January 31, 2013

The Effective Grading Practices Study Group consists of 14 parents, teachers and administrators from Powell Middle School, Romeo Middle School and Romeo High School (see page 2). Additional support is provided from the Macomb Intermediate School District and the RCS Office of Curriculum and Instruction. Members of the study group have been charged with examining current grading practices at the secondary level in order to identify opportunities for improvement. In particular, the study group will recommend grading procedures that focus on student learning and promote consistency in practices across the District.

The study group held work sessions on October 25, November 29 and January 24. In its first three meetings, the study group spent time learning about the challenges with grading. Members have reviewed a variety of literature in their desire to learn more about effective grading practices. The resources that have been consulted include:

- Video: 15 Fixes for Broken Grades presented by Ken O'Connor.
<http://www.misteamnet.com/vidflv.php?who=mac051010>
- Grading and Assessment Practices of the Urbana City Schools in Urbana, OH.
<http://www.urbana.k12.oh.us/Grading/Index.htm>
- Article: Effective Grading by Douglas Reeves, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Article: Reforming Grading Practices in Secondary Schools by Ken O'Connor, National Association of Secondary School Principals.
- Webcast: Grading in the 21st Century presented by Rick Wormeli.

In addition, the study group has examined the strengths and weaknesses of three grading systems: standards based grading, the 100 point scale and the 12 point scale.

The Effective Grading Practices Study Group will continue to meet throughout the second half of the school year in order to reach agreement on changes to grading practices in our secondary schools. Additional meetings will take place on February 7, March 7 and April 11, 2013.

Appendix B

Sample Corrective Agreement

REQUEST TO RETEST

The Basics

Name: _____
Date: _____
Class Period: _____
Concept to Retest: _____

Reflect
Previous score _____

Why?

Three activities I did to improve my understanding of this concept:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

When would you like to retest this concept? _____

Stuff to Attach.

Previous tests
Proof of your activities

Request.

I request the opportunity to retest this concept. I have worked hard to improve my understanding of this concept.

Signed: _____