

# A Foundational Document for Proficiency Grading Practices at Jackson Middle School

**Proficiency Grading** is a system for grading that believes a grade represents a student's ability to demonstrate their skill set and knowledge to a set of specific and clearly-articulated standards (grade level expectations).

At Jackson Middle School, we believe in a proficiency grading system that is based on the following principles:

Principle #1:	A student's grade communicates what a student can do and what he or she knows. It is a measure of the student's ability to meet clearly-articulated standards of skill and knowledge.
Principle #2:	Behavior is not used in grading. Behavior success or concerns are communicated outside of grading.
Principle #3:	Students do not learn at the same rate. If a student is working hard (as evidenced by their habits, progress, and engagement) to meet standards, more time and support to learn the material may be appropriate.
Principle #4:	Both academic knowledge and positive work habits are important to acquire for high school, college, career, and life.
Principle #5:	Timely feedback to students and families is essential to the learning process.

The proficiency grading system at Jackson Middle School honors the following practices:

Assessment Activities / Assignments	<p>Assessment is at the heart of any grading system. Assessment is the act of attributing a score or mark to an assigned task, project, quiz, or test. There are three forms of assessment, each with a different purpose in providing teachers and students with feedback on the learning progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Diagnostic Assessments</b> take place prior to instruction and are designed to determine a student's attitude, skills, or knowledge in order to identify student skill building and learning needs. Examples may include pre-testing and KWL activities.</li><li>● <b>Formative Assessments</b> are designed to provide direction for</li></ul>
-------------------------------------	---

improvement and/or adjustment to a project for individual students or for a whole class. Formative assessments may include classroom/student observation, quizzes, homework, instructional questions, initial drafts/attempts, discrete classroom tasks or activities. **Formative assessments are FOR learning!**

- **Summative Assignments** are designed to provide information used in making judgments about a student's achievement at the end of a sequence of instruction. This includes final drafts/attempts, tests, exams, culminating assignments, long-term learning projects, and performances. **Summative assessments are OF learning!**

Teachers maintain timely and updated grade books which are easily accessible to students and parents (StudentVue & ParentVue). Assignments are categorized by the three assessment types listed above and weighted to reflect proficiency grading standards. Weighting ensures grades will communicate what a student can do and knows in relation to the course standard.

Assessment Type	Weighted Percent of Grade
Diagnostic	0%
Formative	Not greater than 30%
Summative	Not less than 70%

Other	0%
-------	----

Teachers may choose to use a fourth assignment category of “other” to communicate specific success towards behavior goals, participation, or work habits. Any marks in “other” category are intended for communication purposes only and will have zero weight on the student’s grade.

**Due Dates /  
Late Work**

In principle #2, we share a belief that behavior has no place in an academic grade. With principle #3, we acknowledge that students do not learn at the same rate. Principle #4 highlights that a strong proficiency grading system must guide students in both academic knowledge and work habits; skills that are critical for future success in high school, college, career, and life. These three principles, while all a part of a strong proficiency grading system, can, at times, be at odds with one another. This is especially true when considering assignment due dates and late work.

Honoring each principle, Jackson Middle School has adopted the following school-wide practices with regard to due dates and late work:

- All assignments will have a clearly-articulated due date.
- To be considered for full credit, all students are expected to complete the assignment by the assigned due date.
- A student who has demonstrated engagement (evidenced by his or her habits, progress, and personal advocacy) may work directly with the teacher to arrange for an alternate due date. Alternate due dates are at the discretion of the teacher and must be made prior to the assigned due date.
- Formative assignments may not be turned in later than the summative assessment for the current unit of study. The turning-in of summative assignments past their due date is in cooperation with the classroom teacher. A grade reduction, not greater than one letter grade, may be applied to late assignments.
- End-of-term deadlines are hard due dates. Assignments cannot be turned in for credit beyond the end-of-term date.

**Missing  
Assignments**

Missing or incomplete assignments will be indicated in the grade book by the code of "MI," with the word "missing" in the comments field. The grade will be calculated at 50% of the assignment's value, an "F" letter grade value, until the assignment is turned in, and the grade book is updated.

**Revision  
Retake**

Revision/retake opportunities are built into formative work, with the teacher providing students with timely feedback. Therefore, teacher feedback must be based on an explicit measure, rubric, or standard of assessment. Retake/revision opportunities are intended for formative assignments.

**Performance  
Participation  
Marks**

Active classroom participation is a behavior and not a measurement of a student's knowledge or skill base. Student participation and the measurement of the quality of his or her participation is not used in

proficiency grading practices. Student participation is not used in grading practices except in the following situations:

- Performance marks that are aligned to performance standards may be included as formative or summative assignments. This is most common in performance-based courses such as Physical Education, Spanish, Choir, Band, and Drama.
- Performance marks for assignments on standards-based student presentations or public speaking activities.
- Participation, if documented in the grade book beyond the above exceptions, will be weighted at 0% in the “other” grading category, and used for parent/student communication only.

**Resources/References:**

OConnor, Ken. Repair Kit for Grading: Fifteen Fixes for Broken Grades. Allyn & Bacon, 2010.

Smith, Diane. It's About Time: A Framework for Proficiency-Based Teaching and Learning. Business Education Compact, 2012.

“New England Secondary School Consortium.” New England Secondary School Consortium, [www.newenglandssc.org/](http://www.newenglandssc.org/).