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Staff Perceptions on Standards- Based Grading Prior to Implementation

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of
Doctor of Education
in the National College of Education

Steve Perkins
Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

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STAFF PERCEPTIONS ON STANDARDS-BASED GRADING PRIOR TO

IMPLEMENTATION

Steven Kim Perkins

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

National College of Education

National Louis University

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to evaluate the perceptions of a group of middle

school teachers regarding changing to standards-based grading (SBG). Data were

collected from the transcripts of two different focus groups and analyzed. Study results

indicated that SBG measures were not well known by all staff, and many clear resistance

points were present. Resistance points centered around five key themes: fear of loss of

rigor, community pushback, lack of SBG practices knowledge, lack of supporting

infrastructure, and extra time and work required. Recommendations that flow from these

results are that, prior to implementing SBG, comprehensive data be collected regarding

staff beliefs about grading and reporting in general, and that targeted, differentiated

professional development be planned for staff based upon the results of the data

collected. Continuing to expand SBG practices within schools is the ultimate goal due to

the large body of research espousing its benefits.

PREFACE

My relationship with standards-based grading (SBG) has always been one of unending optimism, regardless of the number of obstacles that have stood in the way of positive progress. The philosophy is sound and I believe in it, but I have been fascinated by the amount of negative attention and pushback it receives. I always seem to want to keep talking about standards-based grading. During my master's program at Drake University, where there is a mini hub of SBG positivity, I bought into it quickly and wanted to consume as much knowledge as I possibly could about the methods of assessing and reporting. It got borderline annoying to my cohort members who knew for a time that any freedom of choice given in an assignment meant that I was choosing something related to SBG. I believed at the time and still do that the more I know about it, the better I will be able to sell and defend standards-based grading practices.

In this study, I learned a great deal regarding research studies, staff perceptions, and the nature of doctoral work. Conducting focus groups was an interesting endeavor because it allowed me an opportunity to have structured conversations and practice drawing conclusions and themes from larger conversations. I also learned that every individual has their own background, which impacts their level of acceptance or resistance to a particular subject. Last, doctoral work in general created new systems and methodologies in my life that were not previously there. Organizing and compiling information, references, thought processes, and quotations over a three-year period demanded organizational systems that I typically do not use. It felt very rigid initially, but any other way, I feared that I would have fallen behind.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank many individuals for making this process a successful one. I certainly would have been incapable of doing this on my own. Thank you to my wife, Katie, who encouraged me and gave me the time I needed to get things done. There were many times Katie was on "kid duty" so I could sit in the basement and type, or go to the library. Sam and CeCe helped motivate me to get things done faster so as to be able to spend more time with them.

I would like to thank my entire family for instilling a desire to continue learning and to always be curious. My Mom and Dad have always espoused the importance of education. To my Dad and brother, who already have doctoral degrees, the lame "doctors only" jokes no longer apply.

To my Dissertation Chair, Karen, thank you for being on the exact same page as me with regard to work style and methods. Your checking in and answering all of my questions assuredly allowed me to actually finish this dissertation. I am pretty sure if you were a quantitative person, I would not be writing this right now.

To my cohort members, I appreciate the comradery, the discussions, and the support we gave one another to succeed during our three years together. I learned a great deal from you all and hope we stay in touch.

To all staff from NLU, thank you for being welcoming and for assisting me every step of the way.

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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

As school districts continue to move toward a desire for 21st century skills teaching and acquisition by its students, grading and reporting practices have lagged behind the ever-growing need for data and effective, efficient feedback (Wormeli, 2013). Schools are continuously asked to equip students with skills and knowledge to allow them to be more successful in a workplace that is changing so rapidly that we are educating students for jobs that do not exist yet. On top of content knowledge, students are expected to have a level of proficiency in 21st century skills when they leave the education system. Wagner (2014) has distilled down the 21st century skills deemed essential for students to learn and acquire. Some of the 21st skills involve critical thinking, problem solving, and the ability to diagnose systemic issues. These complex skills needed by students are in direct conflict with grading and reporting measures that are predominant in the country's education system.

Despite the clear need for 21st century skills in the workforce, employers report that job seekers are underprepared and do not possess mastery of these 21st century skills (Marzano & Heflebower, 2012). Especially in grading and reporting, we currently maintain the industrial model of education with regard to most of the educational systems that exist, a model that does not take into account an assessment of 21st century skills or formative feedback of content mastery.

Grading in most schools is traditionally based upon a singular letter grade (Wormeli, 2006). What ultimately factors into a student's final letter grade is determined

by the teacher and may or may not align properly to curricular goals, skills, and knowledge acquired. There is an immense level of subjectivity within the grading and reporting process within school buildings and content areas and among individual teachers. Students and parents are given progress reports in traditional grading systems; any number of items other than content knowledge or skills acquisition can be included in a child's overall grade without overt explanations. Some example items that may enter into a grade calculation and may differ by teacher are extra credit assignments, prepared for class points or penalties, makeup policies, and participation. Allowing items to be included in a final grade that do not directly show evidence of a student's content or skill mastery destroys the informative impact of any possible feedback that may have existed from a single letter. Variations among staff members can lead to further differences in student experiences. This subjectivity does not allow for effective feedback and student growth, demonstrating a need for schools to shift to standards-based grading and reporting practices.

Multiple studies have been conducted stating that standards-based grading (SBG) is more effective for students, staff, and parents in better understanding what they child knows and can do. While research shows that traditional grading systems do not have a great deal of support or successful rationale behind them (Marzano, 2000), shifting to standards-based grading practices has encountered difficulties and stiff resistance from staff in many school districts (Tierney et al., 2011). Parent pushback has also been observed in districts rolling out standards-based processes with entire communities having previously been observed banding together to rally against standards-based

grading. Parent communities have expressed concern that a practice dissimilar from their own educational experiences may negatively impact the college admissions possibilities for their child (Buckmiller & Peters, 2018). With so much research supporting SBG practices, the amount of resistance by stakeholders should be examined further to determine causes.

The site for this study was given the pseudonym Derby Park Community Schools (DPCS) district. It was a K–8 public school district that served students in a suburb approximately 25 miles northwest of Chicago, IL. At the time of this study, it was an elementary and middle school district consisting of seven elementary schools and two middle schools serving 5,600 students. The district was affluent compared to state averages at the time, with a low-income rate of 9.2% in comparison to the state average of 49.4% and a mobility rate lower than the state average in all demographic areas as well. The student racial makeup was largely homogenous, with approximately 75% of the students in the district identifying as White, 13%, Asian, 8%, Hispanic, 2%, two or more races and under 1% each of Black and American Indian Students. Table 1 displays student enrollment data for DPCS.

Table 1

Study Site Student Enrollment Data

STUDENT ENROLLMENT											
	All	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native Hawaiian /Pacific Islander	American Indian	Two or More Races	Children with Disabilities	English Learners	Low Income	Homeless
District	5,581	4,093	76	451	833	14	14	100	919	647	401	12
		73.3%	1.4%	8.1%	14.9%	0.3%	0.3%	1.8%	16.5%	11.6%	7.2%	0.2%
State	1,984,519	944,451	331,838	523,306	102,113	2,061	5,067	75,683	364,698	241,093	968,570	39,579
		47.6%	16.7%	26.4%	5.1%	0.1%	0.3%	3.8%	18.4%	12.1%	48.8%	2.0%

DPCS was in its second year of full implementation of SBG practices throughout the district's elementary schools, and was in the second year of having an exploratory committee at the middle school level. A middle school SBG committee had been formed and was slated to roll out SBG implementation in the 2023–2024 school year, five years after the formation of the middle school SBG committee. Members of the committee represented multiple content area subjects, grade levels, and levels of prior experience with SBG grading and reporting practices.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was first to gather perceptions from staff members regarding their understandings of standards-based grading practices as the district they worked in embarked upon an imminent implementation, and second was to seek to develop correspondingly appropriate supports and action steps to allow for successful implementation based upon those collected perceptions.

Traditional grading practices have been shown to be ineffective in providing accurately and timely feedback to parents and students as to what a child knows and can do. An eventual shift of schools to move to standards-based grading practices is necessary to better communicate student learning. The degree to which staff are receptive to and prepared for implementation of standards-based grading is not entirely clear. Understanding the potential feelings of staff when a new initiative is placed before them is important in order to gain an understanding of where a school is at, and what action

steps should or should not be taken. By gathering perceptions of staff surrounding all aspects of standards-based grading, proper supports can be implemented.

Rationale

The reason for wanting to conduct this study and gather more information about standards-based grading implementation is rooted in a desire to foster continued learning in students and a desire for students to receive effective feedback without being mired in the bureaucracy and inconsistency that exists in certain grading practices. My educational background and personal experiences demonstrate a clear need for standardized grading and reporting practices in order to allow for students of all backgrounds to have fair chances at learning and receiving appropriate feedback.

I worked for nine years in a large urban school district that had a very clear dichotomy between the student populations. The district consisted of approximately 20% high-income families and 80% of students on free and reduced lunch plans due to low family income. The upper-income families were able to provide resources to their students who had access to technology, contacts, and basic necessities at a much higher rate than the vast majority of the other students in the district. The large student group of 80% of the district often had a vast variety of circumstances that provided obstacles to making education a priority.

A significant number of students in the lower-income portion of the district were also refugees. A large influx of families arrived to the area while fleeing the Bosnian genocide of the mid-1990s and yet another large subsection of students consisted of transplants from Sudan fleeing ethnic violence and conflict. In both instances, the

Sudanese and Bosnian students often were balancing work and/or childcare responsibilities in an effort to support their families with school work and a "completion culture," disproportionately more so than these students' White counterparts. Grading based on skills acquired rather than a points acquisition structure would likely create an environment that would allow staff and students to focus on essential learning and lessen the stressors staff and students face in our educational culture of compliance.

I began researching and exploring the logistics of SBG rollouts prior to the 2020 global pandemic of COVID-19. The loss of life and impact on the world transcends education because health is vastly more important; however, from a narrow assessment lens regarding the pandemic, I believe standards-based grading methods are even more important than before.

In March 2020, schools across the United States began eliminating in-person learning and quickly switching to a remote learning model in keeping with CDC recommendations to immediately shut down all large groupings of individuals so as to help in mitigating the spread of COVID-19. Remote learning and the resulting vast reduction in student/teacher interaction time have raised the questions of what classifies as essential learning, how are students to be assessed during the pandemic, and what learning and assessments should look like when students return to school after quarantine and lockdown restrictions have been lifted.

Goals

This study is significant if we are to continue to build a body of literature providing supports and action steps that could be taken towards implementing SBG and

reporting practices. The aim of this study was to better understand teacher needs so as to learn how to best equip them as their school works towards the end goal of full SBG implementation. With SBG practices becoming more normalized, but still not widespread, discussions of change are often nebulous or are discussed in theoretical terms, which makes it difficult for those teachers directly involved in change processes to understand the positive rationale for a change initiative. Studies have shown that SBG practices provide more meaningful feedback and allow all stakeholders to have a better idea of their learning and progress than ever before; yet, school districts nationwide have not enthusiastically switched their grading and reporting practices.

In an effort to change towards SBG practices, this study surfaced the compendium of concerns, trepidations, fears, and general understandings of an agreed upon better grading system. The belief underlying this goal was that knowing these things about staff can help to better guide a district in creating supports for change initiatives.

Research Questions

What perceptions exist amongst staff members regarding standards-based grading?

In order to better learn about staff members' perceptions and understandings of standards-based grading practices, the following questions were addressed in this qualitative study:

1. What perceptions exist amongst staff regarding standards-based grading practices?

2. What obstacles exist towards implementing standards-based grading practices?

3. What supports should be implemented to assist staff in a transition from traditional grading practices to standards-based grading practices?

Theoretical Framework

Using particular theories or frameworks are helpful in allowing a researcher to align data and information in a way that better focuses the results and provides more tangible steps for moving forward. Creswell (2014) advocates for the use of theory in all forms of research to help explain or predict varying phenomena that occur within systems. The conceptual framework for this study was based on the Aspen Institute's Weiss and Connell (1995) theory of change model and thus it is appropriate to frame this study because of its focus on initiative implementation and stakeholder roles and perceptions within the school system making the change. Additionally, there are various ways change leadership can be imbued, from school leaders to staff, in order to help facilitate system-wide change. Using the lens of change in systems and change leadership can frame where a district is at, and using the data collected, help chart a course for successful implementation.

Conclusion

Standards-based grading has been shown through the existing literature to be a more efficient, fairer, and more accommodating system for students and staff. For various reasons, resistance towards this system still exists. Continuing to examine this resistance

in order to determine the best course of actions is essential to increasing student learning

and skills acquisition.

SECTION TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this literature review, several components regarding SBG will be discussed as well as the intricacies of change initiatives in general with regard to buy-in, perceptions, and the transitioning to and implementation of said practices. Examination of the history of grading and taking a closer look at specific grading practices are essential efforts in helping to build context for why staff perceptions may be what they are in regard to transitioning to standards-based grading practices. It is also important to have a specific understanding of the differences in grading, teaching, and reporting between standards-based practices and traditional grading practices. These differences are fundamental in further exploring what elements are best in determining student growth and skills acquisition, as well as the future success of students' careers after school.

Additionally, looking at long-held beliefs of staff can help to shed light on resistance to change in education. Understanding staff opinions and reservations regarding a change initiative is an essential step for any change within an organization.

History of Grading in the United States

Grades vary from state to state, district to district, and ultimately, down to the individual teacher at a classroom to classroom level. This subjectivity in grading has existed as long as schools have existed (Brookhart et al., 2016). In addition to this subjectivity, even with a shift to states adopting curricular standards, the way in which these standards are assessed has remained largely based upon traditional grading practices. For most of America's educational history, these systems remained on a small scale and only as American education became more widespread did investigations into

grading practices begin to occur more regularly. Prior to compulsory education in the

United States, grading and communication were internal processes with data being shared

only on a local level, with families and teachers being the nexus of receiving this

information (Schneider & Hutt, 2013). As a result of the relatively small sphere of

influence a child's grades would have, assessments and tasks matched appropriately. In

early American education, assessment was mainly oral reports that did not allow for

information to be trackable, reproducible, or easy to discern patterns from (Guskey &

Bailey, 2001). Eventually, the nexus shifted to the information finding its way to external

processes with grades being essential for families and at the local level, but informing

decisions and shaping systems at a state and national level. With information about

students being used on a larger scale and viewed by several agencies for interpretation

and informing future decisions, a need to standardize to allow for this upscaling became

apparent. School populations were exploding in cities in the 19th century, which further

necessitated the need to distill feedback and progress on students into a simple measure,

such as a letter grade (Snyder 1993).

The reasons to condense student learning down to a singular letter grade are

many, especially with the growth of student populations and compulsory education.

Narrative reports on students are time consuming and take away from time that can be

spent developing content and curriculum. Teachers are able to spend more time on

building teaching and learning content if they are not asked to spend an abundance of

time on lengthy narrative reports that they may feel are an additional detriment if there

are more frequent report cards with less time between each (Lomax, 1996). Additionally,

at secondary levels throughout America's educational history, there has been a need and desire to rank and file students for entrance to post-secondary educational institutions and class ranks. A shift to a letter grade met with little resistance throughout the country in education (Guskey, 2001). Letter grades have become the main method for reporting progress in American schools and as a result, it can be argued that less impactful feedback is being provided to students.

As late as the 1960s, a very small percentage of workforce labor required training beyond high school (Wagner, 2002). As such, grades, especially at the secondary level, may not need to have impactful meaning if students transition to jobs that have no assessable skills completed during their educational years. *Something* may have been assessed depending on the classes and subjects taught, but as an educational system there is wide swathes of variability as to what that *something* is (Brookhart et al., 2016).

The need to shift to standards-based grading has unfortunately transformed in some states into an unintended consequence as well. The clear need for grading based on standards has in some situations been misconstrued as a need for more standardization within tests. While common formative assessments are essential within and amongst schools to ensure grades are given fairly, reliably, and with validity, a shift to common formative assessments throughout the country did not occur (Brookhart et al., 2016). Unfortunately, in some states, the standards movement shifted away from having rigorous learning targets for schools to adhere to toward increased standardized testing for students (Wagner, 2002).

Current Predominant Grading Practice Fallacies

There currently exists no significant studies that support the continued use of traditional grading practices (Marzano, 2000). The current reality of letter grades has been so ingrained within teacher practices that many are unable or unwilling to consider in any way adapting or changing grading and reporting methodologies. The A–F grading model, at the bare minimum, assigns a single letter grade per student per content area over a defined portion of the school year. Feedback may or may not be included.

Because for most teachers an A–F grading scale is all they have ever known, defenders of such a system, due to no other implemented comparisons, are many. Arguments are made for the continued use of the A–F system. Some teachers believe that without grades, students will be unable or unwilling to accomplish learning objectives and learn content (Guskey & Peterson, 1995). It can be argued that because letter grades are brief singular descriptors more time can be spent on teaching and content rather than on marking or giving written feedback. A–F letter grades are also easier to communicate to students' parents because in all likelihood they were raised in an A–F marking scheme themselves, continuing the system of familiarity and areas of understanding that require little or no reteaching to families. Additionally, because parents most likely are familiar with A–F grading systems, they may inherently lean toward and prefer the same system, causing unease and unrest for any staff members asked to use a different grading and reporting method.

Students themselves have been generally conditioned to these traditional grading practices and have learned the intricacies of such a system to assist themselves in "succeeding" in school without really learning. With traditional grading scales based

upon points, and method of acquisition of points varying wildly, students are able to determine the easiest method to earn points regardless of skills mastered (Iamarino, 2014). Because of the variance in traditional grading practices regarding what behavior or skill earns points, a child's grade is not always indicative of learning accomplished over the course of a grading period of time (Reeves, 2004).

Another problem associated with creating a singular letter grade for students is all of the information that must be conglomerated into a single letter. When multiple sources of information are reported as one grade, that grade becomes less informative and confusing for students and parents to interpret (Guskey & Bailey, 2001). This amalgamation leads to a "hodgepodge grade" that combines so many variables and does not allow for an accurate picture of a child's learning to be discerned (McMillan et al., 2002). This variability is present in multiple ways in school systems.

Eliminating grading variability among staff, in content areas, and across schools as a whole has been examined for years, with results typically showing the same outcome. Studies done throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries have shown instances of high variability and low variability within grading to near equal measure, thereby showing consistency is lacking in grading and reporting in American Education. Brimi (2011) completed an analysis of 73 English teacher's grading and inter-rater reliability measures while all grading the same essay. When looking at the scores that were given when grading the essay, the range of points given was forty-six and all five letter grades were given at least one time by the teachers assigning the marks. Other earlier studies

have conversely shown continued amounts of variability in all types of educational settings.

Several early studies showed that differences in grading criteria, or a lack of clear standards by which students are to be judged, accounted for a great deal of variability (Ashbaugh, 1924; Healy, 1935). The Ashbaugh (1924) and Healy (1935) studies confirm that there were initially no standards by which the content of the student work should be judged, but rather issues with formatting and grammar weighed on the overall grade more so than the quality of ideas presented. When point schemes and criteria were introduced, the variation of grades decreased.

What is Standards-Based Grading?

Standards-based grading has been described as measuring students' proficiency on well-defined course objectives (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). In opposition to traditional grading practices, which often are called simply "grading" practices due to their prevalence, SBG grading practices aim to provide feedback to students and families regarding a student's proficiency and/or progress toward a set of learning standards. Learning and accurate reporting of learning are the pivotal goals in SBG practices. With standards-based grading, more information is given to parents and students (Townsley & Buckmiller, 2016). More information allows for a more detailed analysis of a student's proficiency to be garnered. Beatty (2013) suggested that SBG be broken down into three principles:

1. Grades must have meaning.

2. Grading should allow for multiple opportunities to demonstrate understanding.

3. Non-academic factors should not be included in a student's grade or be reported separately.

Grades having meaning involves more focus on reporting what a student is expected to learn and accurate processes for determining what each reported grade correlates to. This involves more accurately describing what the reporting measures represent. Scriffiny (2008) broke down the A–F scale into a less vague description of how each letter equates to mastery of content and at what level of mastery. Additionally, removing non-academic factors allows grades to have less variability and be a direct representation of what students know and can do (Townsley & Buckmiller, 2016).

Benefits of Standards-Based Grading

Standards-based grading offers many significant advantages over traditional grading systems. When a SBG report card is used, students and staff are able to see a much more accurate picture of what a child knows, is able to do, and where further progress toward proficiency is needed (Guskey 2010).

With thousands of school teachers across the country, there inherently will be variability in methods of grading and reporting. Grading practices of teachers are incongruent and individual grading policies seem to differ from teacher to teacher, based upon their individual beliefs and practices (McMillian et al., 2002). McMillian et al (2002) surveyed over 900 teachers and found extensive variability between whether or not teachers use ability, student improvement, and effort. Using SBG reporting measures

and related rubrics helps to eliminate variability and ensure that students and parents are transparently aware of what they are being graded against (Wormeli, 2006).

Multiple studies have concluded that essential aspects of the benefits of SBG grading and reporting practices are the separation of learning and work habits and behavior (Brookhart et al., 2016; Guskey & Bailey, 2001; Marzano & Heflebower, 2012; O'Connor, 2009). This separation provides meaningful information and may facilitate a greater ability to critically review curriculum and large-scale educational practices. If it is known that the grading and reporting have less subjectivity, as a variable, grading can be removed, or considered less, when determining success of other educational reforms (Brookhart et al., 2016).

Perceptions of Standards-Based Grading

Because grading practices remained traditional for such an extended part of American educational history, a look into the thoughts and perceptions of student grading practices did not occur until relatively recently, starting in the 1980s (Brookhart et al., 2016). Perceptions can be varied amongst staff and outliers are present in nearly all situations when gathering qualitative perceptions; however, several themes can emerge. A study of school staff perceptions published in 1994 was able to categorize five main themes or beliefs that were held about what grading should be (Brookhart, 1994). Brookhart's (1994) study was a review of 19 previously completed studies, and its meta-analysis showed grading perception themes were as follows:

- Teachers use measures of achievement, mainly tests, as determining factors of grades.

- Teachers believe students should be graded fairly.

- Noncognitive factors such as effort are included in many instances.

- Grading practices are not consistent among teachers.

- What is graded varies by grade level.

All of the themes presented allow for a wide spectrum of variability and subjectivity based on who the assessor is. The vast amount of subjectivity as grading currently stands in schools means that there is an element of luck with student placement. A child who ends up in the classroom where a teacher grades effort and the student who tries their hardest but does not grasp concepts may receive a higher grade than the student who grasps the content but may have turned in some assignments late and has points removed as a result (Adrian, 2012). In this instance, the individual who has mastered or somewhat mastered the content has a lower grade than the student who does not understand the content. The question of what should be graded in a classroom varying as much as it does has existed for over a century (Baron, 2000). Many early researchers have found that emphasizing different criteria to be graded has been one of the largest sources of variation in schools (Ashbaugh, 1924; Starch, 1913). It continues to be shown even in more recent studies where staff are asked to explicitly focus on achievement only, that there are instances where a teacher still incorporates some elements of improvement and effort (Cox, 2011).

While Brookhart's (1994) meta-analysis does show a desire for uniformity so as to create a fairer environment for grading and reporting, current practices show that in many instances, no significant nationwide efforts are being made to change to a grading

system that eliminates instances of subjectivity. If efforts are made by individual staff members or school buildings as a whole, the key stakeholders still show a lack of understanding of the basic components and necessary foundations of change required for a successful shift to standards-based grading implementations (Adrian, 2012; Cizek et al., 1995; Imperial, 2012; Llosa, 2008; McMillan, 2001).

Change Theory

The Aspen Institute created a comprehensive roundtable look at community initiatives related to children and families with an emphasis on recognizing how to best evaluate change initiatives while simultaneously looking for possible obstacles to implementation. Within the Aspen Institute's writings, several themes related to successful evaluation of initiatives as well as differing assumptions were uncovered that are applicable to implementing standards-based grading. This concept, called change theory, can help guide a program evaluation and/or school-wide initiative.

Weiss and Connell (1995) have stated that an essential element in all initiative planning is to include an idea of what your outcomes should look like prior to implementation and have methods for measuring the outcomes. By attempting to create guidelines to measure the effect of change, in this case switching to standards-based grading, a district is able to quantify success of the initiative. Quantitative measures of standards-based grading may be difficult to show progress in a way that is easy for parents to understand without the extensive use of rubrics required for SBG grading and assessment. However, case studies of community stakeholders before and after may assist in shedding light on the success of the initiative implementation.

Change theory works to codify processes for change within schools and elsewhere to help create patterns of stability that allow greater chances for success. Weiss and Connell (1995) state that change planning requires three things: making explicit assumptions, defining methods, and clarifying goals.

Understanding the theory of change and theory-based evaluation is helpful in initiative evaluation and planning because it allows those involved to explicitly know what all stakeholders are there for and what the common goal is in advance. Without addressing these topics in advance, during the process of change it is likely that conflicting ideologies may emerge, possibly from parties that assumed they were sharing a similar perspective and had common goals (Weiss & Connell, 1995).

Initiative Implementation Obstacles

Knowing that understanding of the fundamental issues is essential in any system-wide change, there are many documented instances of the difficulties experienced by teachers, parents, and students to shift to and adopt standards-based practices. (Cox, 2011; Guskey & Bailey, 2001; Tierney et al., 2011). Determining the obstacles to implementation involves diagnosing whether the challenges to implementation being faced are adaptive or technical (Heifetz et al., 2009). Whereas technical challenges can be more appropriately tackled with concrete resources, such as time, training, and extensive funds, adaptive challenges are more difficult to solve as their solutions involve individuals changing fundamental values and beliefs that they may have always held (p. 69).

With regards to Standards-based Grading initiatives, the obstacles to implementation are many, including technical and adaptive challenges. Technical challenges for districts tend to focus on technological concerns. Many of the existing School Information Systems in widespread use are built around a traditional grading system and are not readily adapted to Standards-based grading. Rubric comments or non-traditional scores may be displayed in a formative manner, but extensive logistical challenges are needed to output a final score that isn't based on a percent or points score. In other instances, the system used is unable to output a final score that isn't traditionally based, so all earlier assignments are ultimately compared to a traditional system, negating the impact of using SBG nomenclature throughout.

Adaptive challenges are inherently more difficult because the solutions posed to those challenges may cause the culture and climate to turn towards resistance to change (Heifetz et al., 2009). Technical solutions allow for fixes in some instances that do not distress the organization (Heifetz et al., 2009). Studies conducted examining teacher's perceptions during times of change reflect this. Simon et al. (2010) showed differences in the grading practices and professional beliefs of a teacher. Grimes (2010) showed teachers believe grades should be a combination of achievement and nonachievement factors. Surveys of many teachers show a desire to include nonachievement and other behavioral factors into grading (Adrian, 2012; Cross & Frary, 1999; Duncan & Noonan, 2007; Guskey, 2002; Kunnath, 2016; McMillan, 2001; Sun & Cheng 2013).

With a litany of information showing the inherent benefits of standards-based grading, resistance is shown to still be prevalent. Cox (2011) showed an apparent greater

resistance to grading practices being changed by veteran teaching staff having a

significant number of years working in the classroom. Further resistance to SBG

practices has been shown in assessment creation and criteria. Teachers have suggested

that assessments per school cannot look the same across the board due to the complexity

of different subject areas (Duncan & Noonan, 2007).

SECTION THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study was a qualitative study that involved research with focus groups to collect data and reflections of staff members in a single school district. This research study involved open-ended questions (see Appendix A) and directed questions to determine teacher perceptions of standards-based grading and the impact of those perceptions on potential implementation within a district. By focusing on staff thoughts on a more progressive method of grading and reporting student knowledge, my goal was to determine what potential roadblocks toward implementation existed, as well as possible misconceptions. This study included an overall look at the district's grading policies.

My main research questions that guided this study were centered on staff members' perceived knowledge and effectiveness of standards-based grading methods and are the following:

- What perceptions exist amongst staff regarding standards-based grading practices? This study's secondary guiding questions were:

- What obstacles exist towards implementing standards-based grading practices?

- What supports should be implemented to assist staff in a transition from traditional grading practices to standards-based grading practices?

Description of Participants

Derby Park Community Schools (DPCS) served nearly 6,000 students across nine buildings, seven elementary schools, and two middle schools. The district was

predominantly White, comprising 73% of students, with Asian and Hispanic students comprising most of the remaining student population, at 14% and 8% respectively. The number of children with disabilities was at 16% while the low-income rate of students was at 7%. The low-income rate for DPCS was significantly lower than the state average of 48%. The chronic absenteeism rate was at 6% across the district with a range of subgroups being absent from 5.6 % to 13.4%. The two highest groups of chronically absent students were low income and students with IEPs at 13.1% and 13.4%. The two groups with the lowest rate of chronic absenteeism were White and Asian students at 5.6% and 6.9%.

District staffing comprised approximately 400 staff members with primarily homogeneous demographics. Ninety-six percent of all staff were White and the average number of years worked in the district was 15.2. The teacher to student ratio was 1:16.7 compared to 1:18.4 of the state. However, the average split between the elementary and middle school buildings was a higher ratio than the ratios of the two middle school buildings.

The participants in this study included staff members from a middle school located in a suburban school district in Illinois. To protect the anonymity of all study participants and others connected to the study site, pseudonyms were assigned to them and used throughout the study. Staff members who were selected had varying degrees of personal knowledge and experience with standards-based grading and reporting measures. Some participants were already using standards-based grading measures, others were interested in knowing more with a possible rollout being implemented in

their classrooms in the near future, and others had no plan unless directed to have standards-based grading implementation in the foreseeable future. The school site that was selected for this study was a result of ease of access because it was the researcher's place of employment and had a beneficial timeline of standards-based grading research and implementation within the district. The timing of research fell during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which decreased the possibility for expanding to multiple districts for in-person focus groups. The COVID-19 pandemic also necessitated a change in format for the second focus group, requiring it to be held via Zoom video conferencing, rather than in person. One middle school in total was surveyed. The teachers surveyed comprised 10 teachers, with 23 as the average number of years teaching. Three of the participants had taught 30 years or more, with one of those three being in their 34th year of education.

Participants varied in their roles within the building and the subject matter taught. Four of the 10 focus group participants taught science. Two of the participants were social studies teachers. One participant was an instructional coach, one a band teacher, one a PE teacher, and the final participant was a Spanish teacher.

Teachers within the school who were selected to participate in the study responded to a blanket email invitation that was sent out to the school's staff from the researcher that explained the study (see Appendix B). In the email invitation, those who indicated they were interested in participating in the study were asked to email me their signed Informed Consent (see Appendix C) that explains the purpose of the study, describes their involvement and rights, their freedom to discontinue participation at any

time, the confidentiality and information security precautions undertaken, and contact

information for questions. Interested staff were informed that if they chose not to email

the form, a copy will be available for them to sign before the focus group meeting begins.

Of those interested teachers who responded to the email invitation, no teacher was

precluded from participating in the study. With regard to attempting to eliminate further

bias by removing those from the study who were on the researcher's evaluation caseload,

due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the district participating in this study put a hold on any

evaluations taking place for the 2020–2021 school year. This district decision helped to

mitigate bias, though not entirely. At the time of this study, I worked as an administrator

in the study site building, and the participant staff members in this building may have had

held biases speaking freely in front of one of their administrators regardless of their

evaluation status.

      Additionally, I looked at the district's collected materials regarding grading

philosophies and policies in comparison to Des Moines Public Schools' (DMPS) grading

and reporting documentation, due to knowing at the time that DMPS was implementing

SBG processes. By looking through what an established district had in place and a district

like DPCS considering starting the process district-wide, I hoped to gain further

perspective regarding the appropriate steps to take in garnering support for SBG in the

district.

Data Collection

The main research data collection sources were two focus groups, one comprised of six teachers and the other four teachers (see Table 2), and each meeting was approximately an hour in length.

Table 2

Summary Profiles of Participants in Each of the Two Focus Groups

Focus Group Participants

Focus Group #1:
Jason Brosnan: Science Teacher, over 20 years experience, currently using SBG
Kristi Parson: Tech Facilitator, 15 years experience
Kathy Carndon: Science Teacher, over 20 years experience
Karen Drish: Science Teacher, 34 years of experience
George Laird: Social Studies Teacher, 31 years of experience
April O'Donnell: Social Studies Teacher, 20 years of experience

Focus Group #2:
Ophelia Lukas: Band Teacher, over 20 years of experience
Diane Harvard: Spanish Teacher, over 20 years of experience
Kiley Drake: PE Teacher, over 20 years of experience
Kim Orion: Science Teacher, 18 years of experience

In each group, staff members were asked to talk through their personal experiences with standards-based grading as well as their thoughts about its perceived effectiveness in reporting and increasing student learning. The focus groups were recorded as well as simultaneously transcribed using an app and the sessions were held in a neutral location that offered privacy and confidentiality. All focus group audio was transcribed using apps to assist in the process, and the transcripts were proofread and checked for accuracy of content. In addition, the school's grading policies and district handbook pages regarding grading were also collected to support my findings. These collected artifacts helped to support my analysis of where each focus group staff member was at in their comfortability with regard to the specific policies.

Data Analysis

Analyzing the data consisted of checking for the key themes that surfaced within each focus group. By sifting through the notes, I was able to look for key terms and phrases to determine significant patterns or commonalities in thinking between staff members seemingly in favor of standards-based grading and those who were resistant to implementation. Several key terms came out as most predominant throughout the review of the focus group transcripts (see Appendix D and Appendix E). Anecdotally, the staff participants were able to give insight on future action with regard to their personal histories and experiences with learning and assessment. Collectively, the staff members who participated in this study had over two hundred years of teaching experience in a multitude of districts, grade levels, and content areas. Previous history with initiatives, both successful and failed, were partially an influence in their reactions to SBG practices that were imminently being implemented.

Ethical Considerations

There were many ethical issues to take into consideration as a result of this study. Inherently, as a building administrator interviewing staff within my own building, I understood that there would be some elements of bias. Staff may feel uncomfortable discussing in front of an administrator their honest opinions regarding a possible out of fear of negative judgement in the future if the initiative was to come to fruition. As a result of this, in an attempt to mitigate some feelings of judgement and eliminate bias, I attempted, if possible, to only select those personnel who were not on my current

evaluation caseload. Unfortunately, all those who volunteered had at one point been on my evaluation caseload, although four of the 10 focus group members were not on my current evaluation cycle. Additionally, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all staff evaluations were paused for the 2020–2021 school year, the year in which the focus group sessions took place. This evaluation pause may have had the impact of allowing staff to feel more comfortable because they had the knowledge that there was no possibility of receiving a negative evaluation that year as a result of their participation in this study.

Another aspect meriting the maintenance of ethical procedures during the focus group sessions was the nature of my questions and responses as the researcher during the actual time of the two focus groups. Both groups were told that any and all answers provided by them could be acknowledged that an answer was given, but there would be no responses from me agreeing with or discrediting their answers so as to not add my bias. While every effort was made by me during the focus groups to maintain this protocol, upon my review of the session transcripts, it is possible that some trends or themes may have emerged as a result of my positive or negative response to the participants' answers. Responses by the researcher consisted mainly of "thank you," "ok," and follow-up questions were used to gather additional information as much as possible.

Prior to this researcher's foray into this study, I was an advocate for standards-based grading, and actively worked with specific individuals who were curious as to the processes and philosophies surrounding it. In my previous school district, I was a

member of the SBG steering committee and truly believed in the philosophies and goals a standards-based grading and reporting system aims to achieve. Many staff members in the study site building knew of my previous experiences and as a result, could have skewed their answers in a way that may not have honestly reflected their personal beliefs in an effort to appease an administrator in their building.

By selecting staff participants who had a wide variety of experiences in content, education, upbringing, and experience with standards-based grading, my aim was to gain insight into determining recommendations for proceeding forward. While there may not be a study result that will lead to the guaranteed success of the implementation of SBG, or any initiative for that matter, gathering evidence to determine what participants feel will always be a helpful step forward. By understanding and acknowledging the complexity of change, one can better manage conflict in determining how to proceed forward with that change (Patton, 2011).

Additionally, by comparing an analysis of policy against documents by comparing two districts' grading documentation, I hoped to gain greater perspective regarding what steps to take in better readying my district. However, I understood that because I was biased in favor of SBG and believed in its' practices, my analysis was not without bias.

SECTION FOUR: "AS IS" RESULTS

Restatement of the Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gather and explore teachers'

perceptions and previous knowledge of standards-based grading practices related to

eventual implementation. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to surface what

trepidations staff may have so as to better address those concerns with regard to the roll

out of SBG in the school. Through the results of this study, I identified areas in which

teachers appear to need assistance or have more knowledge prior to the successful

implementation. Weiss and Connell's (1995) change theory framework helped guide this

study. An in-depth look at change theory and related readings can be found in the

literature review in Section Two.

In circling back to the purpose of this study, while it was only a small sample of

the district that this study surveyed, it was my goal to provide a useful microcosm for

review to inform future practices and garner meaningful information regarding teacher

perceptions. In order to gather information and understand the perceptions of staff,

qualitative data was collected. This section will detail the findings and an analysis and

interpretation of the data collected. By compiling the results of data collection into

segments and themes, I worked to better understand where the school district was at, "As

Is," in order to make informed recommendations for the future after answering the

study's research questions. As can be seen in Table 3, the study results are structured

around Wagner et al.'s (2006) Arenas of Change or 4 C's: context, culture, conditions,

and competencies. Using Wagner's 4 C's framework allows themes to become more

apparent within the data and the broader context of the district as a whole, with an

ultimate goal of guiding future action plans.

Table 3

AS IS Results and Wagner's 4 C's Framework

AS IS

Context- External to an organization are the cultural, political, economic, and--in the field of education--educational factors that provide influence. They are the elements that often seem beyond our control but deeply impact the work of the organization.	**Culture-** As Bolman & Deal (1997) describe organizational culture, it is the way things get done around here". In other words, while an organizational chart might demonstrate how things; should get done, culture is the reality: it is the patterns, shared assumptions, and interpretations that shape behavior within an organization.
- Traditional Grading Practices - Seasoned staff with many within 3 years of retirement - Autonomy given for grading, no current standardized system in any format - Lack of support, seen as positive by staff to continue with autonomy - Community and parent pushback	- No desire for shared assessments - Divide between seasoned and new staff not supportive but divisive - Veteran staff may push for things their way - Disagreement over purpose of grading - Little administrative checks on common grading and collaborative practices
Conditions- internal to the organization are structural, cultural, economic, and symbolic factors that often constrain but sometimes also support organizational change. Compared to culture, the conditions are the more tangible elements that shape how we make sense of the surface-level health of the organization. Included are financial issues, departmental configurations, leadership and human resource issues, and so forth.	**Competencies-** Because people- not organizations- carry out the change, people within the organization should be equipped with various technical, social, and leadership skills and knowledge. Often, in their absence, even the best-designed plans fail. Competencies can be seen both a 'hard' and 'soft'. Hard competencies might be the actual skills and knowledge; soft competencies might be the dispositions, leadership styles, and communication styles of individual people.

• Leadership varies on priorities. Standards-based grading seen as a pet project of a single administrator • Financially unable to support release time needed to develop common grading practices and CFAs and staff are well aware of said fact. Feel set up to fail. • Not enough coordination between elementary who is implementing SBG and middle schools in process of beginning pilot. • Head of Department of Student Learning left the district midway through this process.	• District leadership is new to the practice with staff; rationale, and reasoning for change not effectively built yet • Technical capacity not prepared because gradebook not aligned with SBG practices • Individual team members on SBG committee are collaborative within small group, few have led district-wide change • Heavy reliance on administrator in charge of committee to spark action from a top down perspective.

Context

At the time of this study, DPCS was a K–8 district comprising seven elementary

schools and two middle schools serving mainly students in the Antilles, Illinois

community of approximately 75,000 citizens. The district had 412 full-time teachers and

23 school administrators. The 2019 Illinois Report Card shows that 76% of the staff held

a master's degree or above; teacher retention was at 92%; and 100% of staff members

had achieved a proficient or excellent rating. Teacher retention rates were vastly higher

than the administrators' retention within the district. From 2017 to 2021, 10

administrators had shifted positions, with six leaving the district entirely and four shifting

to new administrative roles within the district, either in a different school building or the

district office. The teacher retention rate being in stark contrast to administrator turnover

had caused a great deal of initiatives to come and go within schools, creating mistrust and a belief among the staff that the new things being introduced may never come to fruition.

An initial committee was formed in the 2015–2016 school year to begin exploring standards-based grading procedures with a goal of future elementary school implementation only. The aim was to focus on the elementary schools first, making up seven of the nine schools in the district, and later shifting resources and the committee focus to the middle school level. Two district level administrators took the charge for leading the committee and overseeing the elementary committee. They would handle the logistics of the committee meetings and facilitate any action steps needed in the rollout of SBG practices. One of the district administrators was the Assistant Superintendent for Student Learning, Dr. Derek Krennick (pseudonym), who was in charge of curriculum, content, and standards. The other administrator running the elementary committee was the district's Assessment Coordinator, Mrs. Jorie Alan (pseudonym), whose role would complement SBG initiatives well.

The idea for shifting to SBG within the district during the 2015–2016 school year originated from Dr. Krennick, and it was generally regarded as being one of his passion projects that others knew he supported, had evidence to support, and sought to ensure the success of the SBG rollout. He left the district at the conclusion of the 2018–2019 school year to accept a superintendency in a neighboring district. Mrs. Alan, the district assessment coordinator, left the district at the conclusion of the 2018–2019 school year to accept an assistant principal position in a neighboring district. The 2018–2019 school year was the first year of full SBG implementation at the elementary school level, and

was the second year of the exploratory committee for standards-based grading practices at the middle school level.

Both Dr. Krennick and Mrs. Alan were replaced by internal district candidates. Dr. Krennick was replaced by Dr. Reese Fetner (pseudonym), who was serving as an elementary principal and the new position served as her first district administrator role. Mrs. Alan was replaced by Mrs. Katelyn Wilson (pseudonym), who had served for five years prior as the district math content coordinator. The shift to new individuals as leads on the committee caused a great deal of unease for the existing middle school committee members, as well as the elementary school staff who were hopeful for continued support in their first year of implementation. It can be difficult for anyone in a new role to hit the ground running with so many responsibilities, and the SBG committee seemed to suffer.

The 2018–2019 school year coincided with a massive change in assessment data collection practices as well. The district had been using a program called Learnmetrics to store its assessment data for the entire district. This data was only accessible by district administrators and building administrators due to the lack of training available initially, for all staff. This resulted in only a very small percentage of district staff having access to data and as a result, less meaningful changes were happening. To compound the frustrations with the issue of having a new software program for staff to train on, the company Learnmetrics faced corporate issues and lawsuits regarding employee compensation and customer service, resulting in a severe lack of ability for district staff to efficiently and effectively use this data to determine student placements and plan for interventions (Graham, 2017). Having no means of easy data collections and analysis due

to a lack of training and issues with the parent company of the data warehouse led to dramatic shifts in priorities within the district. Mrs. Wilson was in charge of district intervention data, progress monitoring data, as well as state assessment data, on top of being tasked with researching and preparing to implement standards-based grading within the district. As a result of the more pressing need to not allow for a dramatic interruption to the flow of student data and analysis, the SBG committee and communication suffered greatly. In the final school year before the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the world and its schools (2019–2020), DPCS had held only two meetings with the committee regarding standards-based grading and no further direction was given to the committee members. Obviously, the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic put a pause on many plans and school initiatives, but the pause and slowdown of the SBG rollout began long before the beginning of the pandemic.

Another factor giving more context to the struggle of starting any initiative within DPCS was the large cohort of staff within some of the schools who would be retiring in three years or less. Within the district, the average number of years of employment reflected a high percentage of staff who had worked over 20 years in education. Within the building in which the two focus groups were conducted, seven of the 10 members had worked at least 20 years in education and three of the seven were set to retire within two years. Retiring within a few years could make staff more hesitant to take on additional projects or to want to buy into initiatives they believed would have a heavy workload if they know they will be exiting the district prior to the initiative's implementation.

Culture

Bolman and Deal (1997) describe organizational culture as the way things get done in an organization, the way things should be done. Culture is the reality of how things are actually accomplished within an organization. It is the assumptions and beliefs of members within an organization that guide practices and speak to the overall health of an organizational system. Wagner et al. (2006) define culture as "the shared values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and behaviors related to student learning, teachers and learning, instructional leadership, and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school" (p. 102). Culture, negative or positive, can stem from past events within a system, or be brought in from broader outside experiences by one or more individuals.

According to the Illinois Report Card, the average years of service of staff within the district in this study was 15.2 years. Within the middle school that I worked at, the number would skew higher; multiple teachers had worked nearly their entire careers within the school. While this longevity aids in keeping teacher retention data positively high, there are other issues that stem from this fact. There were nearly a dozen staff members who were within three years of retirement, which had a great impact on the school culture.

The district had not been through many whole district initiatives, and the middle school levels, while having regular curriculum adoptions welcomed by the staff, had not been asked to make many significant changes to their teaching practices or educational mindsets. This led to teachers generally feeling like they were respected and given autonomy to conduct their classrooms as they saw fit. While seemingly positive in nature,

this had an underlying effect of building resistance to change among many staff members, particularly staff members closer to retirement age.

The autonomy given due to few new initiatives, and a trust gap due to administrative turnover had led to a resistance to any administrative checks as well. With such a large number of administrative turnovers within the middle schools, the administrators were not viewed as holding individual teachers as accountable as they should be. Sweeping district changes, supported by all administrators and select few staff, can cause harsh pushback.

The resistance to change from seasoned staff may be in sharp contrast to the beliefs and feelings of staff who are new to the building and district. Non-tenured staff with only a few years of education experience may have more experience with progressive teaching and assessment practices. Whether due to implicit or explicit biases, there were documented cases within the building of young staff wishing to collaborate with seasoned staff and being rebuked, and additionally on occasion, reporting such interactions to school administrators. Due to staff falling into two large groups, seasoned staff near retirement and staff new to the field, some dichotomous opinions and perceptions had been informally noted. A young staff member approached a veteran like-content teacher and asked for time to collaborate and create common formative assessments based on standards. The new teacher was told they would not only not be collaborating together, but the veteran teacher, one year away from retirement, told the new teacher that she was going to continue doing things the way she always had. This was a very clear example of a culture not ready for change in many regards as long as any

staff are that resistant to change, or resisting even merely supporting new staff exploring change.

<div align="center">**Conditions**</div>

Wagner et al. (2006) describe conditions as "the external architecture surrounding student learning, the tangible arrangements of time, space, and resources" (p. 101). The physical organization of a school district inherently hampers large scale collaboration and makes decision making and information transfer more difficult. Technological advances have aided in sharing information, but there are many obstacles present for a school or district that is hopeful for a successful change initiative. Significant conditions that negatively impacted DPCS included insufficient surveying of staff and the lack of collaboration among staff members.

As part of DPCS's SBG committee, the district asked for all those who were interested in participating in an exploratory committee to respond by making their interest known. All volunteers to the committee were accepted and were of varying backgrounds and content areas. The committee members had time to learn about and understand the philosophies, successes, and challenges of SBG. Those who were not on the committee had received very little information, and other than a survey that they ignored or responded "no" in regard to being on the SBG committee, there had been zero surveying of district staff with regard to SBG. It has been shown that survey data can be useful in helping to determine level of proficiency and informing next steps. While this researcher could have assumed that those not surveyed further had little prior knowledge about or interest in standards-based practices, I believed that without any sort of data gathering,

the committee responsible for a successful rollout of said initiative would have little idea of how to best ensure its success.

Competencies

Wagner et al. (2006) state that competencies are the "repertoire of skills and knowledge that influence student learning" (p. 99). The competencies within DPCS were varied and not aligned district wide with regard to standards-based grading. Additionally, the competencies of the leaders within each school building vary and can have a direct impact on different success levels of progress in adopting new grading and reporting practices. The competencies of leaders as well as what leaders know about the capacities of their staff members can aid in creating change. By knowing better what adults in a building know and how they develop, growth in schools can be better supported (Drago-Severson et al., 2013).

District leadership had very little previous experience with SBG protocols other than the training they received via committee meetings and speakers during the four previous years prior to the elementary school implementation. Dr. Krennick had previous experience with SBG practices but left the district during the transition process to the middle schools. When Dr. Krennick left the district, the leader in the district with the most SBG expertise also left, leaving a vacuum to be filled by members of the committee to continue the exploratory work, but led by new district administrators with less SBG experience.

The district had Tom Guskey speak to the middle schools about standards-based grading practices in the 2015–2016 school year, prior to the creation of a middle school

committee. Guskey, a preeminent leader in SBG practices, gave a broad overview of what it would look like and aimed to encourage a growth mindset in the middle school staff. His talk lasted approximately one hour in both middle schools and there was no follow up or checks for understanding provided. While this may have been intentional, only presenting it as a "primer" left little knowledge that was likely to stick with the entire staff. Four years later, in the 2018–2019 school year, the district still had a committee assisting in implementing SBG soon, but no other staff have been observed or reported using any direct practices that came as a result of the presentation by Guskey.

Without strong district leadership consistently championing the use of SBG practices and time given for effective professional development, the path to implementation, or even positive feeling regarding SBG, will continue to be a rocky one.

In conducting two focus groups and spending significant time analyzing the subjects' thoughts and perceptions, it became clear there was resistance to SBG, even while simultaneously having a surface level knowledge and acceptance of some of the core tenets of the SBG philosophy. This dichotomy was present in both focus groups and will be expanded upon when searching for common themes throughout each focus group.

Analysis of Policy Against Documents.

Comparing and contrasting two district's SBG policy documents, in this case Des Moines Public Schools to DPCS resulted in multiple observations, though admittedly there were flaws with this process. The DMPS document was a much more fleshed out document that offered a plethora of material on both the philosophy and logistics side. Information regarding grading scales, rubrics, what a report card would look like, as well

as sample assessments using SBG nomenclature were present. The DPCS handbook was 10 pages, providing a broad overview, in comparison to DMPS' handbook that consisted of 39 pages, including references to notable works from authors who guided some of that district's thinking when creating its' handbook. The DPCS handbook would need to be much more extensive and serve as a detailed guidebook for staff, while simultaneously also serving as a sales pitch document for any parent or student wary of a system that was possibly unfamiliar to them.

Focus Group Findings

After both focus groups had been conducted, time and care were put in to ensure accurate transcriptions were created, with timestamps and speaker designations appropriated throughout each one. Recording and transcription was done with the assistance of the service Otter.ai, a program that records audio and transcribes it in real time. The end user is still required to proofread the final results and ensure that the correct speaker tags are assigned to the appropriate phrases and answers attributed to each speaker. Additionally, Otter.ai is able to compile a bank of commonly discovered words that can be categorized into distinct themes that allow the reader to discern the perceptions of the individual teachers surveyed as well as provide a general picture of any group consensus.

While individual opinions and knowledge of different aspects regarding SBG were uncovered and will be discussed further, several common themes and concerns were evident. These were: the wide variety of current knowledge of SBG policies, the need for

time, resistance to change, and evidence of previous experiences or "word of mouth" impacting judgement.

Current Knowledge of Standards-Based Grading Policies

Of the six participants in focus group one, all six had some experience with or at least basic knowledge of SBG policies. Jason, Kathy, and Karen were all previously a part of an initiative approximately 10 years prior to the 2019–2020 school year when they were asked to use standards-based grading for a unit and include a rudimentary SBG report card alongside a students' traditional report card for their other classes. April O'Donnell was a member of the SBG steering committee who was tasked with exploring the possibility of rolling out SBG practices in the near future. George Laird had seen examples of tiered and leveled assignments for social studies that were in line with SBG practices, but was not practicing or exploring SBG use in his classroom. Kathy had a child at an elementary school that was using standards-based grading practices and had familiarity as a parent but also had previously piloted SBG practices alongside other science teachers several years before. Kristi discussed understanding that a neighboring district was well known for their SBG policies, demonstrating knowledge of SBG outside of any discussion or initiative within the district. None of the members of focus group number one described having had any experience with SBG professionally from a previous place of employment.

The science pilot, which was initiated several years before my tenure in the district, ended within one year. Staff were asked to begin using standards for grading and reporting in at least one class. Staff were given some time to ensure there were rubrics in

place for their major assignments that would tie to standards, but the rubrics were not

peer reviewed or examined by other science staff within the district or by district

administrators. After only one year of piloting, the strong requirement of science staff to

continue using SBG was dropped, and district meetings and support surrounding SBG

was also removed.

Of the four participants in focus group number two, only one participant

demonstrated a deeper knowledge of SBG practices. Kim was using SBG in her

classroom, and had since the pilot was started and abandoned 10 years prior. Ophelia,

Diane, and Kiley had minimal knowledge of logistics and functionality of SBG practices,

but understood rubrics and retakes as being large tenants that exist within the system.

None of the members of focus group number 2 explained that they had any connection to

SBG through familial or previous professional experiences.

Of all 10 participants in both focus groups, only two expressed that they were

currently implementing SBG in their classroom, with no traditional grading or reporting

being used. Three members of the focus groups had no connection to SBG practices

through work, family or previous employment, and were able to speak only to what they

had heard or been told by others.

The 10 members within both focus groups could broadly be placed onto three

specific levels of a continuum of knowledge regarding SBG: Those currently using SBG

procedures, those who had previous experience in some fashion through previous piloting

or familial ties, and those who were aware of its' existence and could speak in general

terms as to what they believed it was, but had no personal or professional experience

suing it. Jason and Kim were the two members in level one, currently using SBG practices. Kristi, Kathy, Karen, and Amy fell under the second level, having either previously attempted SBG or were actively on the committee exploring its efficacy. George, Ophelia, Diane, and Kiley could be grouped into level three because they had no previous experience using SBG and based the majority of their opinions on what they knew or had heard from others. A subgroup independent of all other groupings were the science teachers, the four staff members who had previously piloted SBG policies.

Several aspects of standards-based grading practices were brought up organically by the members of the focus group, demonstrating knowledge of some aspects, even if those staff members were not currently implementing it. The words and phrases—habits of mind, retakes, rubrics, meets, exceeds, mastery, and assessments—were all used by every focus group member. While these phrases are not solely related to SBG nomenclature, they are often used frequently as basic tenants of the process (Guskey, 2002; Wormeli, 2006). Negative and positive perceptions were applied to all of these terms, which will later be broken down further.

Resistance Points

Over the course of the two focus groups, negative elements and perceptions became prominent throughout as reasons why individuals would have trepidations. Karen Drish made it clear that her hesitation was actually full resistance to any implementation when she stated that her previous trial of SBG policies was, "the worst experience of my life." Broadly, the resistance points can be categorized as follows:

- Fear of Loss of Rigor

- Community Pushback

- Lack of SBG Practices Knowledge

- Lack of Supporting Infrastructure

- Extra Time and Work Required

Fear of Loss of Rigor

"I want to make sure DPCS keeps the reputation it's had for all these years"

— George Laird

Standards-based grading practices aim to ensure that all content covered in classes is able to be tied back to standards, typically state level content standards, with varying mastery levels. In many instances when transitioning to SBG, if a previously taught lesson or activity does not explicitly tie to a content or learning standard, the teacher should seriously consider removing the lesson for being extraneous (Wormeli, 2013). Concerns from George and Jason were raised with regard to the possibility of losing lessons they deemed vital if everything they taught must be tied to a standard or otherwise be removed from their practice. George questioned if "other things get lost" and will "a certain richness of content" disappear if there is not flexibility in what items can be covered if not explicitly tied to a standard. Kim echoed this sentiment but from a technical standpoint regarding grammar. As a science teacher Kim stated "that's the tricky part for me. . . . I'm not an ELA teacher so I don't want them to think they're graded on communication skills, but this student is obviously not on par with someone who is able to smoothly communicate it." In both instances, content lost or content standards not tied specifically to a particular content area, there was a desire by staff to

continue to operate in a way incongruous with SBG practices, or at the very least, find a compromised midpoint. Others in the groups wanted clarification as to what was able to stay in the lesson or what must be cut. If an assessment might tie to a small number of standards or not necessarily the main standard for the unit, if that would still be allowed to be taught, they would be more understanding of the process.

Another element commented on within both focus groups and most discussed by the first focus group was their knowledge of the amount of grading levels present in some SBG systems, and variation between the committee recommendations and what they may already use or what exists in neighboring districts. In many school districts implementing SBG, all content and skills rubrics are tiered into four distinct categories (Des Moines Public Schools [DMPS], n.d.). Typically, the four levels are: (a) Insufficient Progress, (b) Developing, (c) Meets, and (d) Exceeds. To attempt to eliminate more possibilities of subjectivity, the DPCS district's SBG committee had elected to use only three levels: Insufficient, Developing, and Meets. This was done due to the difficulty of separating Meets and Exceeds and is based on the belief that individual teachers would be able to differentiate and enrich content for students who have demonstrated proficient mastery on an individual student level. While these levels were technically not finalized because the district was still in the committee phase, George did state his belief that not having an integrated Exceeds level may lead to a lack of creativity and a significant grouping of students that could be separated out further if there were more levels to delineate specifically where they fell on the high end of a standard being assessed.

Kiley echoed this sentiment that only including three levels in a SBG system may cause more confusion:

> We will have so many kids that "meet." Is that a "high meet" or a close to, or exceeds meet . . . so now you have so many students getting the same grade as each other, it's kind of like when teachers get rated as proficient. You have teachers who might get a "Proficient" and go above and beyond, but didn't meet the standards they're looking for, for "Distinguished." But then you look at some of the people that you may have worked with for the last twenty years for example, and you know they also got "Proficient" and they are lazy.

This perceived loss of rigor also is tied to district reputation and a desire to keep the perceived excellence within the district high. At several points in the first focus group, all group members stated or agreed with others that their acceptance of moving forward with implementing SBG would be contingent on the perceived excellent reputation of the district. Implicitly, the opposite belief of a loss of reputation or excellence as a result of any change to grading and reporting would result in their lack of support for any change or initiative.

Community Pushback

"We have to sell this to the community that pays their taxes to us. We don't just get to do

what we want"

— Karen Drish

Another resistance point that was brought up was pushback related to the surrounding community. The community broadly refered to the feeder high schools, the

parent community within the district, and surrounding school districts that may have or

have had experiences with SBG. Diane Harvard expressed concerns related to students

transitioning to high school, a district that did not use standards-based grading and

reporting and had informally stated that progressing toward any SBG practices was not

currently being considered by district or building administrators. There was a strong

belief in the second focus group, especially that going to a high school that used

traditional grading will be a difficult transition and students will be set up for

disappointment in high school if DPCS district transitions fully to standards-based

grading.

It was discussed in the second focus group that letter grades "counted" and a

disservice may be done to students who do not see any letter grades until they enter high

school, which may further put them in a disadvantageous position when applying for

colleges. To mitigate this domino effect while recognizing some merit to SBG practices,

Diane offered that 6th and 7th grade students may be more successful with SBG

practices, but by the time they enter 8th grade, they should begin to transition out of SBG

or remove it entirely to better prepare them for high school. I wish he would have asked if

this resistance would have been eliminated if the feeder high schools were all using SBG

practices. Additionally, George stated that he had spoken to high school staff in the feeder

district, and "they're not super happy about what we're doing" and that some of the

individuals at the high school district he spoke with were "pretty high up."

The participants in the focus groups who have described themselves as having no

previous experience with SBG practices at all brought up neighboring districts'

experience in attempting to implement SBG. They had all heard of school districts within

the county that had previously attempted to pilot SBG and chose not to move forward, or

implemented SBG, but only for a short period of time, after which all of the schools

reverted back to a traditional grading system. George noted that it would seem like a lot

of work to create all the necessary rubrics and structures for implementation and then to

have the work eventually be for nought if there was a return to traditional grading

practices. The focus on the current high school perceptions and practices segued to the

parent community as well.

  Both focus groups expressed trepidation regarding how their students' parents

would react to such a change. One science teacher, who stated that the science department

had piloted SBG previously, asked, "what do you say to the parents and this community?

We tried this experiment before, and it was a disaster." Karen also specifically noted a

domino effect of removing traditional letter grades, or rather removing awards and

accolades tied to a traditional grading system that would not necessarily be possible in a

standards-based grading system. If GPA is no longer calculated due to rubrics being used

in an SBG system, awards for High Honors and Honor Roll would result in

administrators "picking up all the phone calls."

  Ophelia, Karen, and Kiley all echoed this parent concern. Karen stated that in

previous exploratory committees regarding standards-based grading, members of the

community and multiple parents were included as a part of the early planning and

discussion process. Kiley stated that individuals have a difficult time with decisions

foisted upon them if they were given no ability to offer input during the creation of an

initiative. Jason noted in agreement with the group that ultimately the educators in the building must be beholden to the taxpayers and accountability should remain high to ensure student learning and success. They agreed that at the very least, the processes need to be communicated to the parent community in such a way that even if they were not at the initial creation of the logistics, they were able to see the benefit from afar and would happily support and defend the system after experiencing it.

The domino effect from the change brought up previously by Karen in focus group one led to the other members considering the impact on logistics directly affecting them. Jason questioned how he would manage eligibility for the wrestling club he coaches if there was no longer a letter grade in place to determine eligibility. April discussed special events and activities, such as assemblies and field trips, and how students would be excluded from them if a traditional grading process was no longer used. April surmised that some of these special activities could no longer be based off of a student's grade, but be related to a separate Habits of Mind score if SBG was implemented in the district.

Lack of SBG Practices Knowledge

"It was the worst experience of my life."

— Karen Drish

An element that came up frequently throughout both focus groups was related to what was known about SBG, or what was perceived to be known about SBG. The staff who were interviewed described broad disagreement with some aspects of SBG without fully understanding caveats, logistics, and correct methodologies for implementation. For

example, Diane stated that allowing retakes for tests was a bad system because "students will not be motivated and will take assessments unprepared, knowing that they can always retake it." Wormeli (2006) and Guskey (2002) directly allay this concern on multiple occasions when stating that teachers should allow retakes with caveats. By providing supporting steps and a retake procedure, staff can be assured that when a retake is used, a genuine effort was given and advanced preparation was undertaken by the student, as opposed to the fear of staff that students will simply ask to retake assessments over and over ad nauseum.

An element of disagreement that was uncovered during both focus groups was a belief that students would be motivated more and learn more if traditional letter grades were used as opposed to assessments that used rubrics or displayed SBG reporting measures. Both focus groups discussed a perceived ineffectiveness of systems that do not use A–F lettering due to students and families comparing whatever vocabulary was used to a traditional system anyway. Kiley stated that the high school districts DPCS students feed into do not use SBG reporting, so it will do students more of a disservice to have them flip between systems of grading and reporting than to make a switch to SBG for only a student's middle school years within their K–12 timeline.

A clear distinction in level of staff resistance was seen in reporting measures versus assessment measures. Where many of the participants interviewed expressed an understanding and acceptance of some of SBG assessment protocols and strategies, a greater number of staff members who were surveyed did not believe that the reporting nomenclature needed to change from the standard lettering used in traditional systems.

When the teachers interviewed were asked about Habits of Mind and separating behaviors from reporting on what students have learned, staff had varying opinions as to the efficacy of removing behaviors from finalized grades. April O'Donnell discussed her belief that Habits of Mind should be entirely separated from any scoring or impact on grades, yet the others interviewed expressed that they should still be a part of their scores, even if just a small part. Diane noted that as early SBG measures had been trialed and sampled by staff on and off throughout the years, many staff still removed points for late work, behavior, and other measures not directly related to student learning. Karen echoed this sentiment and said that homework was worth points in her class and should be worth some points. April pushed back on this idea, reminding the group that for homework procedures, points should not be awarded and homework should be viewed as practice only. Both groups commented that they believed the overall staff population would resist the idea of homework being worth zero points.

Multiple times throughout my tenure as an administrator, I have had interactions and discussions regarding grading, assessment, and reporting practices that have given me insight into a teacher's practices and beliefs outside of the information garnered from the focus groups. As an essential tenant of SBG, the focus should be on growth and progress of learning towards a standard as opposed to tracking points and completion of assignments as the top measures of student success. One particular example that I encountered multiple times, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, revolved around essential information. Staff members would approach me concerned that a student had turned in very few assignments and many zeros were present in the gradebook, usually

referring to students who had missed learning due to difficulties from the pandemic, whether a student was being quarantined or otherwise. Staff asked me what should be done. On every occasion, I told the staff members to select three to five assignments that would show the teacher that the student had grasped the essential concept being taught, and to exempt any other assignments that just focused on completion, points, or did not cover the essential standards. All of these teachers viewed this solution as an effective one and were appreciative they did not have to track down the student or implore the student to make up all of their daily assignments. This focus on essential learning and standards was in fact these staff members implementing SBG practices, though they were not aware of it unless told so.

Lack of Supporting Infrastructure

"Grading got really convoluted."

— Kim Orion

In the standards-based grading system of reporting, there should be no letter grades given, but simply a report of where a particular student is at in their progression at a moment in time towards understanding a particular skill (Brookhart et al., 2016). While this generally entails heavy use of rubrics and reporting vocabulary such as "Developing," "Meets," and "Exceeds," these words and rubric versus point totals may have difficulty being compatible with certain school online gradebooks, or school information systems (SIS). In DPCS, all final grades were reported as letter grades, even with attempts made by those outlying staff who had a desire to report SBG measures prior to district implementation.

Kim and Jason, who were already implementing SBG within their classrooms and for a number of years, stated that they had to get creative to work with the existing district online grade book. Ultimately, Jason stated that "on the back end, the program actually needs to issue a letter grade which gets confusing for parents."

Most SIS programs within districts that may be capable of rudimentary SBG reporting were still fundamentally "all or nothing" programs, unless a great deal of work was put in up front to insert standards into a traditional gradebook (Peters & Buckmiller, 2014). Jason said that all of his assignments were rubric based and no longer had point values at all in order to better feed into the SIS and not have a mix of types of assignments that may make the gradebook report incorrectly. Kim echoed Jason's sentiment as well, explaining that making the gradebook work, which is almost entirely based on traditional grading procedures, is an exercise similar to trying to put a round peg into a square hole. I had previously commented to those in support of SBG that whoever can make and market an online gradebook that prioritizes SBG practices over traditional ones would become a very wealthy individual. Peters and Buckmiller found this as well. "It seems evident that until widely used and comprehensive student information and reporting systems begin to offer legitimate alternatives to percentage-based frameworks reporting only traditional letter grades, standards-based grading efforts will continue to be at a distinct disadvantage" (Peters & Buckmiller, 2014, p. 16).

While not physical infrastructure, human resources are critical elements of infrastructure, especially in implementing a system relying on a knowledge base from a particular expert within a field employed within the district. As stated previously, Dr.

Krennick was the first to begin the push for SBG practices within DPCS. Within the four years after he left to pursue a superintendency, three individuals were placed in charge of leading the district in SBG implementation. This administrative turnover broke any continuity in professional development, leadership sessions, and training for the district SBG exploratory committee. While teacher and administrator turnover will always be a constant, four administrators in charge of an initiative within a five-year period only served to hamstring a cohesive plan and vision for ensuring successful training and implementation of SBG. Distributing the responsibilities among a small group of staff members would more effectively ensure essential information remained within the committee and district as opposed to forcing a "soft restart" every time a person in charge of an initiative moves on to another opportunity outside of the district.

Financial infrastructure to support trainings is essential as well. In order to allow time for content-alike staff to work together creating formative assessments, at times, release time must be given to groups of staff, whole departments, or the entire group of content teachers within the whole district. At approximately $175 dollars per sub per day, even a single department being allowed a building release to align to standards or create assessments would cost about one thousand dollars per day for an average size department. Giving each department at least one release day per quarter to allow time to be given for SBG work would cost four thousand dollars per department. At the time of this study at the middle school level, there were eight departments, meaning at the bare minimum with only four release periods per year, the additional cost per school would be

$28,000. Depending on funding for the given year, this expense may meet with resistance at the district level.

Extra Time and Work Required

> *"I don't think you are going to have a lot of buy-in if we have to sit through 150 essays and go 'what is question three going to be used for' and figure it out."*
>
> — Diane Harvard

Another theme that emerged from multiple staff members' comments was the possible understanding that while SBG may be a more impactful system for tracking student learning, it may require such a significant amount of work and effort to implement correctly that some staff may decide they would rather not put in the work required. By maintaining their current grading and reporting practices, they have less "new" work to do aligning assessments to standards and evaluating or creating rubrics. Those staff members who had already seen the merits of SBG may take on the extra effort required, but those staff members who were unsure about the benefits of SBG at all could potentially use the amount of effort required as a means to object in full to any change to a progressive style of grading.

Kim, one of the science teachers within the focus group who was asked to pilot SBG methods several years before I was working in the building, noted that authentic feedback requires a lot of work because multiple choice tests often do not provide the kind of feedback desired from SBG, although they often require the least amount of time to grade. Kim reflected on her past experience with piloting the SBG initiative:

They would constantly want us to be grading these paragraph responses at

the end of every single lab. But you know, ELA teachers have half as many

kids so they would be able to do that, but then science, we were like every

week, even if it's like a paragraph, but it's 135, every time, and it was, it

became extremely grueling. So, we, there are certain things that we just had

to step back on because it's hard to do.

Adding to the concerns about the amount of effort and time required was the

belief shown by some staff that all standards should be covered at all times throughout

the year. Karen discussed the number of Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS]

used for science classes and expressed that even if the NGSS were divided up over the

three years that students are in the middle school, the "amount of time it would take to

grade . . . it would be next to impossible." This concern would be allayed by the fact

multiple experts have continued to impress upon teaching staff that the number of bodies

of evidence per standard, as well as which standards can and should be assessed per

grading period, should be a manageable number to not increase the day-to-day grading

work of staff when compared to a traditional grading system (Brookhart et al., 2016).

SECTION FIVE: "TO BE" Framework

After surfacing the thoughts and emotions of staff members who were on the cusp of implementing a change initiative that so drastically reimagines how the majority of staff will assess and report on their students' learning, it was clear that the positive voices of the few with SBG experience may not match up with the majority who did not have experience. Apprehension and uncertainty, matched with specific personalities and competencies, can mark the transition to SBG for failure. However, previous research has shown that many elements of SBG methods show staff more effectively what students know and allow students and families to have a better understanding of skills acquisition among content standards. The ideal direction of this district, and others, is one where SBG is used across all grade levels and content areas and is the "norm," without strategies and information needed to defend its use and practice.

Having examined the current As Is scenario present in DPCS using Wagner's 4 C's framework, a clearer picture of where the district should be, "To Be," emerged as well as the action steps needed to support the transition. Underlying all action steps and logistical moves taken to help ensure the success of SBG within any school building is a fundamental change in the minds of educator's grading philosophies. A true belief in the efficacy of SBG practices is an essential undercurrent of its success, alongside the tangible action steps. With clear evidence of issues and the goal of successful SBG implementation, the goal of what a To Be framework should look like involves understanding the ideal context, conditions, competencies, and culture required to shift a building and district's assessment and grading policies successfully (see Table 4).

Table 4

TO BE Future Vision and Wagner's 4 C's Framework

TO BE

Context- External to an organization are the cultural, political, economic, and--in the field of education--educational factors that provide influence. They are the elements that often seem beyond our control but deeply impact the work of the organization.	**Culture-** As Bolman & Deal (1997) describe organizational culture, it is the way things get done around here". In other words, while an organizational chart might demonstrate how things; should get done, culture is the reality: it is the patterns, shared assumptions, and interpretations that shape behavior within an organization.
- Standards-based grading practices and reporting in active practice. - More teachers graduate with understanding of progressive grading practices - Autonomy as a team or like subject partner - Parents looped in and transparent communication	- Staff see value in having common formative assessments - Helping one another with rubrics, reporting, and CFAs aids the individual themselves to be more efficient in understanding student learning and progress - Retirements may help lead way to new teachers familiar with progressive reporting and grading methods
Conditions- internal to the organization are structural, cultural, economic, and symbolic factors that often constrain but sometimes also support organizational change. Compared to culture, the conditions are the more tangible elements that shape how we make sense of the surface-level health of the organization. Included are financial issues, departmental configurations, leadership and human resource issues, and so forth.	**Competencies-** Because people- not organizations- carry out the change, people within the organization should be equipped with various technical, social, and leadership skills and knowledge. Often, in their absence, even the best-designed plans fail. Competencies can be seen both a 'hard' and 'soft.' Hard competencies might be the actual skills and knowledge; soft competencies might be the dispositions, leadership styles, and communication styles of individual people.

• Leadership recognizes massive impact of SBG and reallocates resources to better support • Time given to staff within buildings and across buildings to build rubrics together • All building leadership trained on SBG processes and not defer to singular expert within district • Time given not only during support and build phase but during and after initial implementation	• Actual knowledge compendium built up over years. Resources divided up and available for all stakeholders at various levels of understanding. • Members of SBG committee able to disseminate information on their own and no longer need to rely on district leadership. • Grassroots buy-in capable as a result of SBG committee members modeling and practices.

Context

After examining the As Is account of DPCS, there were clear, wide gaps between administrator knowledge, training, and passion for an initiative, and the same level of capacity for teachers within the building. Staff had been privy to murmurs of an eventual shift towards standards-based grading practices, but had not had access to any formal introduction or training. This left the small percentage of district staff who were a part of the committee being the only teachers with some knowledge, but they were not properly trained themselves or effectively backed by administrators who were also mainly learning, to build capacity before any formal introduction of SBG.

In visioning the To Be model in Table 2, what is ever present is access to knowledgeable teacher leaders, administrators, and properly formulated and thought-out resources and professional development (PD). In the To Be picture, PD is welcomed by

staff who have been provided resources in advance so as to readily accept trainings that fundamentally change the way staff members assess students.

In addition to a lack of professional development experiences related to grading and assessments, the shifting personnel within the district had been cause for concern. There is a clear distrust in the As Is setting that the district is in due to continuous building and district administrative turnover. This paired with a general stability of teaching staff has caused a culture where change is looked upon pessimistically due to the lack of trust. In a To Be situation, the district would have teacher stability as well as administrative stability, thereby building trust in the staff. If teaching staff believe an administrator will be employed in the district during the entire length of the research, piloting, and implementation of an initiative, there is more likely to be buy-in and collective capacity building.

Culture

The culture within DPCS did consist of a variety of teacher backgrounds and experiences. However, the varied experiences and skill sets of the staff was not given time and space to shine in the culture of the district at the time of my study. The As Is scenario was one where while there was surface level mention and good intended desire for a progressive culture, time was a limited resource where staff and administrators focused their efforts on individual curriculum and teaching practices within the four walls of a teacher's classroom.

This relative self-isolation widens the gap between those who actively seek change and those who are content with their current practices. While there were teacher

leaders who wished to expand the knowledge and skill sets of others, they were not given time or enough resources or recognition to thrive within their limited window of time for any meaningful professional development. This lack may lead to resentment from the very teacher leaders who should be a driving force for positivity and change within the district.

In a To Be model, the culture within a school practicing standards-based grading is one that embraces collaboration and the individual foundations of SBG. Staff creating formative assessments together, creating and comparing rubrics, as well as scoring assessments would help to ensure greater commonality between staff and a more equal footing for all students. Continual practice to improve inter-rater reliability would also be present.

Conditions

The conditions of a school district relate to the external structures in place impacting time, space, and resources. In the As Is condition of the district, there was not a significant amount of time given to standard-based grading assessment and grading professional development. The current members of the committee did not have extensive experience themselves with SBG practices. They were being told that SBG was coming and they were working through how to explain to other staff how to use it, without having been given PD themselves beforehand.

In an ideal To Be scenario for DPCS, the district has every member of the committee being a knowledgeable advocate and building resource for others on all items related to SBG. Working in a backward design model would involve the initial members

of the exploratory committee being fully trained on the philosophies, logistics, and technology needed to successfully use SBG in their own classrooms.

Another aspect of the conditions of the district impacting the possible success of standards-based grading implementation was the surveying that had and had not been done regarding grading and assessment. Surveying can be an excellent metric for collecting data of all kinds. With regard to surveying staff prior to a desired initiative, it could be used to gauge staff about SBG practices, specifically collecting information about the following:

- previous experiences,

- personal organizational level,

- desire for change,

- comfortability within position, and

- current beliefs about assessment and grading policies.

By collecting information in advance of an initiative rolling out, and even during the exploratory phase, the change leadership individuals can have a better sense of what supports are needed.

Competencies

Wagner et al. (2006) describes competencies as skills needed by staff that influence student learning. With the DPCS current professional development model, the As Is picture is one that is unable to dedicate adequate resources and time to SBG education. Limited breadth and depth had been given to education about SBG practices, philosophies, and logistics. The data collected showed that staff members' understanding

of progressive grading practices was limited, and there was a clear belief that their current practices were suitable for their needs, as well as the needs of students and families.

Variation of knowledge regarding SBG practices was seen in the As Is model. Several staff members were fluent in SBG practices, while data collected showed knowledge levels varied significantly between staff and departments. A successful To Be state would help to cater professional development and technology needs to the specific needs of individual staff members. Table 5 shows the elements needed to ensure a successful SBG "To Be" implementation.

Table 5

Requirements for Successful Standards-Based Grading To Be Implementation
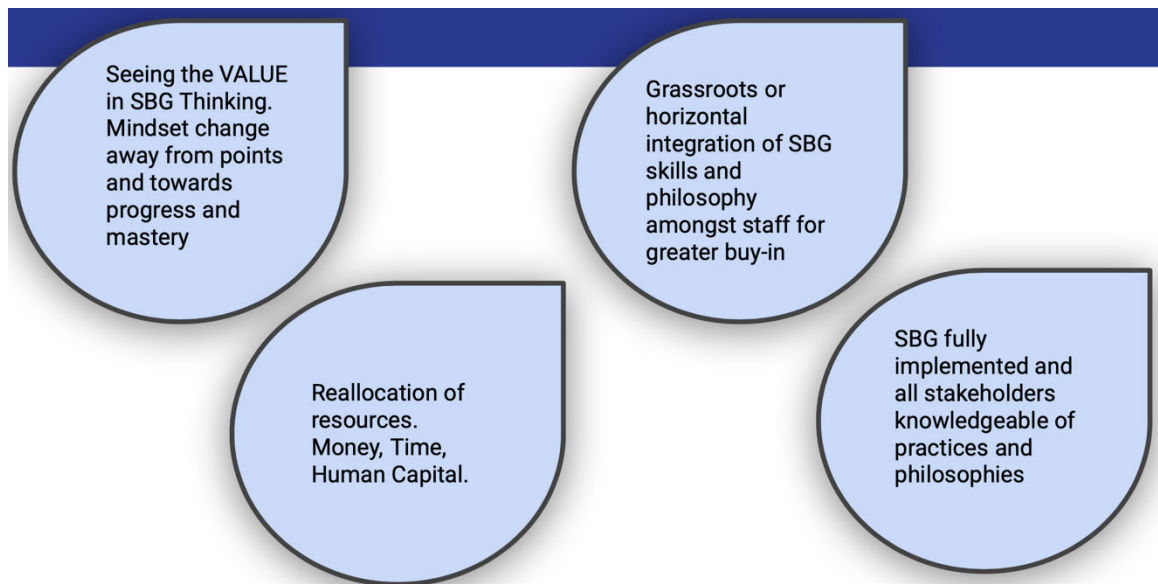
An additional challenge for SBG implementation was the limitations of the technology used to support staff. Grading programs typically were unable to directly translate standards and feedback into a manner that computer programs could create output in an objective format. The very nature of SBG practices allows for feedback that involves narratives, subjectivity, and has no "number or letter" value applied to them.

The To Be state would involve staff who were adequately trained and knowledgeable about standards-based assignment creation, technology logistics, and they would be able to accurately and thoroughly explain the philosophies to students, families, and colleagues. Successful SBG implementation cannot be done without personnel competencies, regardless of level of readiness from a tech or building logistics standpoint. A school district that has devoted funds to gradebooks that most similarly emulate SBG reporting will not have success unless staff members are aware of its philosophies and have broken down the standards for reporting effectively.

SECTION SIX: STRATEGIES AND ACTION STEPS

Several strategies and action steps should be taken to ensure a successful

implementation of standards-based grading. These steps are necessary to garner buy-in,

effectively equip staff with the tools and support they need, and create and retain building

leaders who will lead the charge in supporting SBG policies. Table 6 provides a summary

of the proposed strategies and action steps followed by discussion of the critical

components of determining a base level of knowledge and differentiated professional

development.

Table 6

Proposed Strategies and Action Steps

1. Determining Base Level of Knowledge	2. Targeted, Differentiated Professional Development	3. (Tangential) Administrative Longevity	4. (Tangential) Growth Mindset
• Surveying Staff as to current practices • Understanding Staff beliefs about retakes, grading scales, rubrics, and mastery reporting	• Create two main paths of differentiation • Level 1 is Philosophy, those needing to be sold on theory • Level 2 is logistics, focusing on gradebooks/rubrics	• Ensure steps are taken to maintain continuity of "keeper" of the information for SBG lead. Committee members could spread responsibilities amongst many	• Building skill sets to allow adaptive change to be more possible • Time for growth, reflection, and collaboration

Determining Base Level of Knowledge

In order to best educate and train staff in all things SBG, a base level of knowledge must be determined by building and district leaders. In order to understand where staff are at in their grading and reporting practices, the surveying of all staff must be done. This surveying should have a few main goals: (a) to determine what staff members' current grading and reporting practices are, (b) to determine what they may already know or not know about SBG practices, and (c) to collect feedback to determine current perceptions and allow building leaders to extrapolate resistance or buy-in points that may already exist among the staff.

This type of surveying should be continuous and evolve over time for the entirety of the SBG research, logistics building, and implementation process. It is important to change and continue assessing throughout the continuum to see how staff perceptions and buy-in may mold and change over time (Ozan & Kincal, 2018). Allowing for free form responses in surveying for SBG is very important due to the complexities of the various SBG elements. Trying to determine where a staff member or department is currently at in tying assessments to standards may be more possible, for example, with open-ended survey questions rather than a Likert scale.

The data collection can also be tiered in a manner similar to SBG assessments themselves in order to subtly educate staff while collecting feedback. By creating surveys that are differentiated and allow staff to speak specifically to their needs while leaving open the possibility of not having every item needing fulfillment, staff in theory could appreciate they are being assessed in a manner similar to how they are being expected to assess and survey students. This type of surveying can also be done as formative

assessment throughout PD sessions to understand where staff are at and help inform

future professional developments or areas of need (Koh et al., 2010).

Professional Development

Once a base level of knowledge is determined from surveying staff regarding their

perceptions and skill set regarding SBG, then a proper implementation plan for training

staff can begin to take shape. Broadly there should be two categories that staff in DPCS

or any school district fall under after being surveyed, those who are aware of SBG

practices and those who are not aware of SBG practices. From the staff who are aware of

SBG practices, two additional layers should be determined previously from surveying.

Are these staff members in support of SBG or are they opposed to it? These results will

assist in determining which professional development route should be taken for these

particular staff members. The two main routes that should be used when developing

training come down simply to the categories I would like to have headed as "Philosophy"

and "Logistics."

The two branches of professional development for SBG are not evenly split;

within DPCS, it is clear there will likely be a smaller percentage of staff following the

"logistics" PD route. The PD sessions focused on logistics and implementation will be

specifically targeted towards individuals, discovered within initial surveying, who believe

in and support SBG policies. They have very little to no resistance to any SBG theories or

standard protocols, and they would benefit most from professional development that

includes specific instructions and strategies regarding creating assessments, comparing

and discussing common grading practices, and having technical logistics and support with the school's information systems.

Differentiation of professional development is important in providing successful trainings for staff that allow them to receive information that is most beneficial to them (Hedrick, 2005). For those staff members who are interested in logistics training, spaces most fitting to their needs are essential. Gradebook training and rubric creation would require use of computer labs and the support of district technology personnel. Staff looking for collaborative scoring or assessment creation will require time with content-like peers and small group spaces as opposed to large group PD. Depending on the subject material being taught within the district, travel between schools may be essential in order for any staff needing to meet with other district teachers who are not in the building teaching the same content. Travel and/or extensive time needed will require coordination with district human resources personnel in order to acquire substitutes and ensure classroom coverage so staff has extensive time to meet to determine standards, assessments, and reports.

The second major component of professional development for SBG needs is far more important if the majority of staff surveyed have little experience with or knowledge of standards-based grading. The philosophy of SBG is the second route that may encompass a large amount of district time, effort, and resources. This coordinated PD session is targeted toward staff members who may have multiple beliefs or skill sets but can broadly benefit from the main message. Staff who should be a part of "philosophy" PD are those who have very little knowledge of SBG practices, know SBG but are not yet

comfortable implementing it in their own classrooms, and those who may or may not know details of SBG but actively resist or are against SBG grading and reporting policies. Essentially, those who are in the philosophy group still need to know the "why?" of standards-based grading before they can move to a place where implementation and real-world usage in a classroom is at all possible.

Theory and philosophy of SBG professional development sessions must be informative, positive, and convincing in order to change the perceptions of those who may actively believe SBG practices are in fact not what is best for students, in spite of multiple studies showing otherwise. In order to best ensure success, the facilitators of the philosophy PD sessions must be led by experts in SBG policies, ideally exemplar staff from within the district, or outside consultants who have extensive background knowledge and years of experience with SBG. Because the tenants of SBG touch categories such as behavior, assessment, rubrics, grading, and reporting, the PD leaders will likely have to answer a multitude of questions in order to help persuade at times and convince pessimistic staff about the proven benefits of SBG. Differentiating within the philosophy group needs to be able to target the subgroups of staff within as well. Those staff members who have been surveyed to be actively against SBG will likely need a trainer who has previous experience in leadership roles and experienced pushback from staff before. A staff member who is extremely knowledgeable about SBG and supports it, but is fearful of reprisals and judgement from coworkers may flounder in this particular training role.

Multiple steps can be taken to turn the tide of support, and just having an expert is not enough; workable examples and practical resources must accompany what is presented. Anecdotally, staff often have the mantra that if you are able to immediately take one thing from a PD for immediate use back in their classrooms, the PD should be considered a success. Resources, whether internally developed as a committee or provided to complement the professional development or speaker, will be essential in getting staff to feel that the PD is worthwhile for them.

SECTION SEVEN: POLICY ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

There are many implications related to these conversations with staff regarding grading practices, larger implications than I may have initially been led to believe would occur. As an overarching theme, the district's grading policy needs standardization across all departments and schools. Additionally, the policies and processes regarding the implementation of new initiatives needs overhauling as well because the data show a great lack of understanding and the base knowledge needed in order to change methodologies.

The results from the focus groups show a large discrepancy in grading practices between not only the small sample size of staff who shared their concerns, but anecdotally, all departments, grades, and buildings within the district have distinct differences and incongruencies in grading policies. In speaking with focus groups, there were differing opinions on the efficacy of standards-based grading as a whole. Coupled with a lack of concrete standardized grading practice policies in the building and the district, this leads to multiple variables, including the random chance of teacher assignment impacting a child's grades. Implementing SBG would allow for staff, students, and families to have a greater understanding of what students know, and how they have shown growth over the course of their educational careers.

A connecting policy issue with regard to implementing SBG as a district is the standardization of grading policies and the organizational change related to changing long-held beliefs and methodologies. Simply providing SBG resources to district staff is

insufficient; teachers have had autonomy to grade however they wanted for years and are unlikely to change methods independently without sufficient logistical supports and appropriate professional development.

In order to ensure that SBG is rolled out by all and with efficacy, there needs to be sufficient PD in order to have a greater chance of success that lasts beyond the initial push years. While grading policies must be changed, effective PD is essential in ensuring lasting change. Creating a purposeful plan that fits within a timeline that can maintain momentum is paramount to the success of an initiative rollout (Peters et al., 2016). The school district should make efforts to implement distributed leadership and professional development that has grassroots elements, developing leaders from within and at all levels of the school system. In speaking with my focus groups, while there was a desire for an improved grading policy, it was clear that the staff members wanted and needed direction. A directive toward an end goal, even a positive one, does little if support and tiered groundwork is not laid for staff to help get them to the final destination.

Policy Statement

Due to overwhelming evidence showing the positive impact of SBG (Guskey et al., 2016), I recommend the school district make continued efforts to implement standards-based grading and reporting practices in all buildings as soon as it is feasibly possible. This change in policy must be simultaneously paired with enriching and effective PD. Consequently, professional development practices and norms must be standardized and expanded upon in order to ensure the success of the first recommendation.

Analysis of Needs

Educational Needs

From an educational standpoint, there is concrete rationale for both policy recommendations. Many studies and meta-analyses have shown the benefits for all stakeholders of SBG policies. While many look at SBG as simply how things are graded and how they are reported out for progress monitoring, the underlying core of SBG relates to learning in its reliance on rubrics and standards that all objectives and learning activities are tied to (Wormeli, 2013). By having everything referenced back to standards and standardized with rubrics, lesson objectives and what is being assessed are generally more meaningful and show greater levels of student learning.

SBG focuses on changing mindsets regarding teaching and learning, for students as well as staff. The ideal shift with a standards-based grading policy is one focusing on the two essential questions: "What do I want students to learn?" and "How will I know they have learned it?" (Wormeli, 2006). These two questions allow for a school to not need to make any mention of points, percentages, extra credit, or simply "They're a good kid."

It has been previously discussed that some staff may be resistant to change due to difficulties inherent within the process. Changing long-held beliefs and allocating enough time and money are several of the barriers to change. As a result, the true need and policy change is creating a more consistent professional development plan, for this and any

other future initiative. From a teaching standpoint, staff must be made aware of how this is going to be a positive change that will result in more efficient time spent on the logistics of teaching, such as grading and increased student learning.

Economic Analysis

From an economic standpoint, there are several factors to consider and a great deal of variability between what is possible depending on a school district's available funds. The spectrum of expenditure is mainly based on if the district wants to add more of a technological component. The four main expenses would be: (a) the cost of staffing substitutes to allow for release time for staff to attend PD, (b) extra timesheet hours if staff are allowed additional time to create rubrics and common formative assessments, (c) the costs of running the PD sessions themselves, and (d) any costs associated with any technology that will be used to implement SBG.

If the main source of time given to staff to attend PD sessions is during their regular work hours, substitute teachers will need to be procured to allow the staff to attend sessions. With a medium size district of approximately 400 certified staff and substitute teacher pay approximating $112 per day, the cost of a release day would be approximately $45,000 for one day. In order to be fully trained and educated on SBG processes, at a minimum, each staff member should be granted one release day per quarter, for a district staffing cost of $179,000. Ideally, PD should take place more frequently. One release day per month over the course of the school year would result in costs of approximately $450,000.

An additional methodology for calculating costs would be to not allow release time, but to build in after school time that is part of staff members' contractually obligated time on Mondays. A certified staff member's hourly pay is $33.25 for outside of contractual hours. If an hour was suggested for staff every two weeks, the cost to the district would be $26,600 a month at a total cost of $266,000 for the school year. This second option provides far less professional development time, and historically within the district, professional development sessions had been half day to full day sessions. One hour may be insufficient and, therefore, be a less desirable option compared to full days requiring substitute coverage.

Another cost that may be taken into consideration is the cost of the school information system used to enter and report grades. While many online gradebooks have advantages and disadvantages, there has been difficulty finding one that caters perfectly to SBG practices. While costs vary from program to program, anecdotally, districts spend between thirty to fifty thousand dollars on new information systems for tracking grades.

Social Analysis

As discussed previously, making systemic change engenders many obstacles and overcoming enough obstacles for successful change requires taking many steps. This is applicable for all changes in any climate; the variables may be different in variety and severity per issue. Organizational culture is a large factor in assessing the ability to shape and direct change within a building (Ucar, 2019).

The climate of the world now especially lends itself to a shift towards standards-based grading. The COVID-19 pandemic has created scenarios all over the world where

clear content gaps are forming and traditional teaching has had to make rapid changes to keep up with the need for a remote educational system to ensure the safety of students, staff, and families. In a non-COVID year, staff could very easily establish a culture of point grabbing and compliance and completion over demonstrating knowledge.

During the second half of the 2019–2020 school year and with the subsequent year continuing with COVID mitigation, the culture and climate surrounding student learning has been tense. Many staff who have been inflexible in adjusting their methodologies have exhibited exhaustion and dismay at how the year is going. Constantly asking for compliance and completion of assignments when battling attendance issues, technology issues, and safety issues, has taken its toll on many individuals. The staff who have shown a willingness and ability to be more flexible and adapt their instruction and assessments to the difficult nature of this school year have shown more success and generally appear to be able to better manage the responsibilities of a teacher during a global pandemic.

During the climate of a pandemic school year, the successful teachers have demonstrated strategies that tend to be in line with standards-based grading philosophies, even though they are not actively aware they are implementing SBG "like" protocols. With students being forced to quarantine due to CDC protocols, daily work and assignments have been exempted in many cases, but students, staff, and parents still want to ensure learning and demonstration of mastery is occurring. Staff are cutting assignments that do not directly reference a learning objective or standard and are asking themselves "what does the student need to know?" and "what do they need to show me so

I know they have learned it?" These are in line with SBG practices and have helped to eliminate the point-grabbing mentalities of a traditional grading system.

Political Analysis

With a rollout of an initiative that may change the fundamental practices of teachers, there will be increased scrutiny on the collective bargaining agreement between the district and teachers to ensure their collective rights are protected. Professional development enrichment and ensuring proper pay and time is given to an initiative will likely meet little resistance. Staff may have concerns about their "professional autonomy" with regard to changes in grading and reporting. Anecdotal evidence from many schools without SBG policies shows practices like grading on behavior, and extra credit, can be found everywhere. SBG policies would mandate, whether in a top down fashion or through a committee, that many detrimental practices that may have been in use by staff for years be ceased as quickly as possible.

Staff may push back against an initiative for changing grading policies especially for those who may be nearing retirement age. A substantial change that requires significant professional development to succeed will likely not be looked upon fondly by staff leaving prior to full implementation but during training years.

Pushback has shown to be strong in several districts that have implemented or explored implementing SBG (Peters & Buckmiller, 2014). Community stakeholders, often represented by their respective school boards, require education on SBG policies themselves for continued buy-in to be garnered and be effective.

Legal Analysis

There are no state codes regarding grading policies or practices that would come into major play regarding standards-based grading practices. The major item that would need clarification at the high school level and entering into college is how credits transfer with SBG-based reporting measures. Within the district participating in this study, there would be no legal ramifications, but throughout a child's educational career, SBG measures may conflict with other district or state statutes regarding the number of credits required.

Additionally, many policies that are in place may have specific grade requirements, for example, scholarship prerequisites or course entry prerequisites, but few of these items are legally binding or require action by governing bodies.

Moral and Ethical Analysis

The implementation of standards-based grading policies and installing more efficient and effective professional development is best practice for schools. From a moral and ethical standpoint regarding SBG, one must look at how traditional grading practices disproportionately impact certain student populations. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many school districts have given students and families a choice of whether they would like to remain remote for the year, ostensibly for safety reasons. However, there have been documented cases of students remaining remote to care for younger siblings while parents work. This has more greatly impacted free and reduced lunch communities that then struggle to keep up with classroom teachers who continue to prioritize compliance and points. It makes more sense from an ethical standpoint, to implement any policies that provide equity. Using SBG policies would allow for more

affluent families to continue to complete enrichment activities as needed or wanted, while simultaneously allowing low-income families to demonstrate learning, without fear of repercussions for not necessarily completing every assignment due to home and life circumstances.

Implications for Staff and Community Relationships

Staff and community relationships can run the full spectrum in terms of response and attachment to many initiatives. Staff relationships will likely depend on garnering buy-in, which will likely be impacted by individual schools' administrator-teacher relationships. In a school with a highly positive culture and climate, as well as distributed leadership, there will be more buy-in for the change and it will likely see greater success. The buy-in will be higher for the SBG initiative if the increased emphasis on productive professional development goes with it. In determining success regarding staff buy-in, the educator must also be willing to become educated in the basic foundations of any type of change (White, 2017).

With regard to the parent-community relationship and possible implications of these policies being implemented, there is an equal possibility of pushback of standards-based grading policies, but a far larger likelihood of pushback and negative reaction to a more comprehensive policy of professional development. If more staff time is devoted to professional development, that could lead to the possibility of more release days which in turn leads to many more days with a large number of possibly less qualified substitute teachers in the building with students. In the long run, PD has an important purpose that

should pay large dividends, but any short sightedness on the part of the community regarding more release days could cause backlash.

Conclusion

Standards-based grading is an effective means of assessing and reporting student growth and learning, yet this method of grading and reporting is only very slowly appearing in schools and is overall not a prevalent system in American schools. By implementing strong and effective professional development over a steady and measured amount of time, teachers' perceptions of SBG should shift toward a positive reception and allow for a greater amount of success in future implementation.

SECTION EIGHT: CONCLUSION

Introduction

As previously shown in the literature review, standards-based grading and reporting measures have been shown to not only be more effective at conveying to stakeholders what learning has taken place, it is a more meaningful system in that it fundamentally changes how parents, teachers, and students should approach learning within a school. Removing extraneous items and ensuring that behavior, attendance, and all other measures not directly related to the content, do not impact the report of a student's progress. However, even with large quantities of research showing the benefits, resistance is high among staff members.

This resistance is related to several factors, but it can be broadly attributed to a lack of experience, resistance to change, community pushback, and a lack of technology integration. All of these things are surmountable challenges, but the former two, lack of experience and resistance to change, fundamentally require a change of teaching, grading, and reporting philosophy for staff. Some of these staff members may have been using a traditional grading system for decades, and have grown quite comfortable with their current methodologies.

In order to begin to turn a corner and start the implementation process within Derby Park Community Schools district, and other schools not using SBG, several measures must be taken. The largest measure is implementing rich and effective professional development that will not only provide logistics and resources for staff, but change teacher philosophies so as to best support SBG practices.

Discussion

The purpose of this program evaluation was to determine what current grading practices are used in a district in order to guide future practices. By determining what staff currently used in their classrooms and what they believed about grading and reporting, I had sought to build a sense of the general level of knowledge staff members had on best practices for grading. By understanding where staff are at in their beliefs surrounding grading, a future guideline could be created to determine the best course of action in moving a district effectively toward standards-based grading policies.

The process addressed the purpose in accurately collecting information about teacher's beliefs, perceptions, and other feelings regarding standards-based grading and reporting measures. Over the course of one session each of two focus groups, I was able to determine with specific details, the positive and negative connotations each person in the groups attributed to SBG. The methodology also allowed for group self-talk, which allowed the study participants to be more reflective than they might normally be without my prompting.

The goals of this study were addressed by creating a beginning roadmap for approaching implementation of a new SBG initiative; not a comprehensive step-by-step guide, but by building an understanding of where staff were at in their perceptions in order to more effectively build PD that would be meaningful. While the goals of the study were met, the goal of determining perceptions of staff could be expanded in future explorations, by using additional focus groups to gather more information. A mixed

methodology, including surveys, would allow for a greater amount of information to be gathered, although the organic nature of a focus group truly allowed individual fears, beliefs, trepidations, and resistance points of the staff participants to come through very clearly.

This organizational change plan is twofold; ultimately, it is about implementing standards-based grading, but first, it is critical to work to eliminate or understand resistance measures to implementation. My change plan recognizes that staff can be at various points in their educational career, and because of this reality, change initiatives need to be broadly differentiated to best match those being served by any change plan.

As such, the policy of providing differentiated professional development addresses the issues of staff being at different places at any given moment in their career. I address this by recommending better surveying of staff at a building level before any serious steps are taken toward educating and implementing a change toward SBG, or any change.

Leadership Lessons

I have learned several lessons as a result of this study. I have grown to appreciate the use of a focus group. Though time consuming, it allowed for more organic conversation and a dynamic within the participants that allowed for a more in-depth assessment of where every staff member stood in their perceptions. Additionally, I learned that even within a small sample size, with only two focus groups comprising less than 20 individuals, the resistance to and perceptions of standards-based grading vary widely.

This variance caused me to grow and also showed me future areas of growth. In past initiatives or decision-making processes, I have been a part of, the various branching paths or solutions have often been rather binary as to the solution, or binary regarding support of or support against an initiative. With SBG, there are so many elements to the process and as a result a vastly larger number of variables and levels of support or resistance. An individual staff member could be supportive of removing percentages and tying all assignments to rubrics, but strongly oppose the idea of multiple retakes for summative assignments. As a leader, I have to continue to navigate those difficult situations in which layers of support and resistance may be difficult to discern, or separate as needed, in order to garner buy-in or create support.

Conclusion

Understanding staff perceptions of standards-based grading is critical to ensuring successful implementation later on when logistics and roll out schedules are considered. Gathering these perceptions is essential to being able to craft targeted, timely, and effective professional development that can ensure success. Any change initiative measures would benefit from these data-gathering techniques to better understand where a building staff is at, and if they are ready for philosophical or logistical change.

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APPENDIX A

Semi-Structured Focus Group Interview Questions

1. How do you currently report student learning?

2. What do you know about standards-based grading?

3. What positives exist in a standards-based grading system?

4. What role does behavior have in the grading process?

5. What obstacles do you think exist if this school were to implement SBG?

6. How do you think the standards-based system will work for your current assessments?

7. What aspects of standards-based grading do you not feel comfortable with or feel you need to know more about?

8. What would you want training or professional development regarding SBG to look like?

9. What do you believe a report card should look like that is based on learning standards?

10. How would you describe standards-based grading to someone outside of education?

APPENDIX B

Invitation Email to Staff

Hello All,

For those of you that do not know I am a doctoral student at National Louis University in the beginning stages of conducting research. I am looking for those interested to participate in a focus group regarding standards-based grading reporting and grading measures with the intent of gathering thoughts and perceptions on the practices as we look towards implementation. Ultimately, I am hoping to gain insight as to what staff perceptions of SBG practices are in order to inform possible action steps to make the transition more successful as we move towards standards-based implementation.

I am looking to recruit 3–5 staff to participate in one focus group that will last approximately one hour and take place after school on a date to be determined sometime prior to March 2020.

I will be randomly selecting a group after receiving responses and notifying those individuals regarding scheduling a date for the focus group. Please reply to this email if you are interested and return the informed consent form as well. A copy of the informed consent will also be available to sign at the start of the focus group if you do not email the filled-out consent form as well.

Thank you in advance to those who are interested in participating.

Steve Perkins

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent: Semi-Structured Focus Group Interview

My name is Steve Perkins, and I am a student at National Louis University, I am asking you to participate in this study, ***Staff Perceptions of Standards-Based Grading Prior to Implementation,*** occurring from January 2020 to March 2020. The purpose of this study is to understand staff perceptions within middle schools at the District regarding standards-based grading reporting and assessment measures. This study will help researchers develop a better idea of potential obstacles to a successful implementation of standards-based methods. This form outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

By signing below, you are providing consent to participate in a research project conducted by Steve Perkins, student, at National Louis University, Lisle Campus.

Please understand that the purpose of this study is meant to explore possible avenues to successful implementation of standards-based grading, and not critique or judge individual perceptions, but rather understand and make conclusions from them. Participation in this study will include:

A focus group interview session scheduled in the winter of 2019–2020
   o Focus group will last approximately one hour and will include
      approximately 15 questions to gain an understanding of how staff assess,
      view the role of behavior in the larger context of grading, and perceive
      reporting methods.

o The focus group interviews will be recorded and all participants have

the right to view and have final approval on the content of interview

transcripts.

Your participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without

penalty or bias. The results of this study may be published or otherwise reported at

conferences, and employed to inform grading and reporting practices. Participants'

identities will in no way be revealed, with all data being reported anonymously and

contain no identifiers that would connect data to individual participants. To ensure

confidentiality, the researcher will secure recordings, transcripts, and field notes in a

locked cabinet at home. All digital files of recordings, transcripts, and field notes will be

stored securely in cloud drives password protected by the researcher. Only Steve Perkins

will have access to the data. Upon completion of the study, all data and records relating to

this research shall be destroyed after 3 years.

There are no anticipated risks or benefits, no greater than that encountered in daily

life. Furthermore, the information gained from this study could be useful to staff,

administration, and district personnel in other districts looking to implement standards-

based grading and reporting methods.

Upon request, you may receive summary results from this study and copies of any

publications that may occur. Please email the researcher, Steve Perkins at

███████████ to request results from this study.

In the event that you have questions or require additional information, please contact the researcher, Steve Perkins at ████████████████ or by phone at ██████████.

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that have not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact Karen Tardrew at KTardrew@nl.edu, the co-chairs of NLU's Institutional Research Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth; email: Shaunti.Knauth@nl.edu; phone: (312) 261-3526; or Dr. Kathleen Cornett; email: kcornett@nl.edu; phone: (844) 380-5001. Co-chairs are located at National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL.

Thank you for your consideration.

Consent: I understand that by signing below, I am agreeing to participate in the study ***Staff Perceptions of Standards-Based Grading Prior to Implementation.*** My participation will consist of the activities below during December 2019 to February 2020.

1 Focus group lasting approximately 1 hour

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date

_____   _____
Researcher's Signature   Date

Focus Group # 1 Transcript

SBG Focus Group 1 3/5/2020
Thu, 3/5 3:08PM • 1:09:25

SUMMARY KEYWORDS
standards, question, grade, kids, learning, year, separated, based, grading, students, reporting, parents, understand, points, people, assessments, district, teachers, tests, teach

SPEAKERS
Steve Perkins, Jason Brosnan, Kristi Parson, Kathy Carndon, Karen Drish, George Laird, April O'Donnell

Steve Perkins 00:00
Okay, So that's recorded so essentially with the, with the nature of the focus group, I'll kind of go through, just the logistics the layout and just a couple of requests and just things to, to know as we go through it. And we'll, we'll get to the topic of the focus group in a second but if you guys could just make sure that you're speaking, not in a whisper level I think we're okay but just make sure you're clear throughout the focus group. When I'm asking questions, it's a semi structured focus group meaning I've got a list of 10 questions. But I have the flexibility to ask follow up questions or clarifying questions and that doesn't destroy the efficacy of what I'm trying to get at so those will be noted separately as well. I'm going to repeat, just again everything that is said here is here and all pseudonyms will be used. And then at the end of the study when everything is published you'll have access to the paper, you'll have access to all the materials transcripts of everything here today. Just everything we do, you'll have access to.

Karen Drish 01:09
Do we get to celebrate?

Steve Perkins 01:10
You can certainly celebrate. If you would like, yes. During the 10 questions. I am almost merely like a moderator. I won't be responding in the affirmative or negative questions so please don't feel like your answers should be posed in a way to necessitate a response for me. It's just kind of kind of be a thank you. Okay, sure. Tell me more about by unit will necessarily get a statement of agreeance from me because I'm just gathering thoughts and opinions, because I want as much as possible, you're open and honest opinions about the different questions, the focus group

01:50

Steve Perkins 01:51

method, as opposed to individual interviews, some of the idea being that we're able to get more natural and organic conversation so feel free to build off of one another, If you feel compelled, and then just kind of appropriately if we feel like we're ready for the next question, we'll go on to the next question. The idea is to have no more than an hour, I'll take some notes as we go through. And then I think we're kind of good to get started. I don't think I have any preference as to like going around I don't know if that's where we want to start so I just want to leave it open to all as we go, and don't feel compelled to answer personally every question because then that kind of takes away from the natural conversational tone. Yeah. So I guess we'll just get started if that's okay with you guys. All good. Alright, so the first question we have today is how do you currently report student learning in your classroom?

Karen Drish 02:48
We give grades.

Jason Brosnan 02:52
I know that I'm not I'm kind of off from all the way a lot of classrooms do it because I kids kind of regarded as different but in my grade book, we have, we, we set it up so that the grades are reported merely as mastery, proficient, developing, or beginning and there's no scores or points or any numerical values associated with that course on the back end where the school actually needs to issue a letter grade they take him in his percentages which gets a little confusing for parents, but right now the way mine is set up it's set up as as rubric values.

George Laird 03:38
And yeah, I think the projects and whatnot that we do with the eighth grade level are all rubric based. So, there's points. You know it's either a 4,3,2,1, you know, for most of the different items there. And then when we do assessments that would be like a unit test my that would be based on a percentage that we'd be given in that

April O'Donnell 03:59
and test or projects to add on what George was saying is, so we do 80/20 so assessments, whether it be any project or whether it be an actual written or some whatever assessment we're giving is worth 80% of the students grade and homework or classwork is only worth 20% of the student's grade,

Karen Drish 04:20
and in eighth grade science I'm assuming Sally is still doing it that way, cuz she told me how to do it, but that we couldn't get more than 10% for Habits of Mind type grades like homework and daily work, and that everything else would be 90%. So, I just thought would work well I was given. And I actually would give more for habits of mind because I think if given that opportunity because I think that's a bigger predictor of success as an adult.

Kathy Carndon 04:46
And in my class, I've smoked homeworkers like 5%, and exit slips are like five or 10% of forget and then tests and quizzes are the biggest. The other.

Steve Perkins 05:03
So, in terms of just gathering thoughts and perceptions on standards-based grading, Overall, what do you know, or what is your background knowledge or experience about standards-based grading?

Karen Drish 05:14
It was the worst experience of my life. I told you that, because we were put in a room where we were told to write tests with the teachers from the other school, and the tests had to be clumped by standards so I had to write a unit test was so many questions per standard. And then you had give for 150 kids, a grade for one standard and then a grade for another standard and if you wrote a CER for 150 kids, you had to give a grade for the claim a grade for the evidence and a grade for the reasoning, and I cried the whole time I graded because it was so much work, and it was so awful. And then the other school didn't even give the same test after we spent all that time writing. It was way too time consuming.

April O'Donnell 06:03
I'm on the standards-based committee. I do see the value in separating habits and mind from grade actual grading, because I think that if you're actually supposed to be showing what the student learns I think that the fact that it was late does not show what they learned is this that is something that if you're reporting it separately. I think it gives it more weight, because it's you're specifically reporting on whether or not they can turn things in on time, and if the answer's no that's, I think, read a little more loud and clear then in 82% reads, where that kid would have really had a 90 but he turned in every assignment late. So, I do see the value in separating out the two, when reporting on student learning.

Jason Brosnan 06:47
I feel like that that's my mantra when I'm grading something is I don't want behavior to influence me, or whether the student behaviors, things like that, I want to measure how much science they learned and so, like, I tried to blank everything out, it did when we made the multiple choice tests that I felt like that was kind of like the least effective way to do it but when I do a, like a lab practical or or or a lab based assessment, it is really easy to identify like this is one skill. It's easy to tell the kid, 'This is what I need you to be able to do. I need you to show up and show me that you know how to do that one thing.' And that actually made it a lot easier but it was the hard part was identifying what the one thing that I really wanted them to know was instead of lots of little factoids that I wanted them to memorize.

Karen Drish 07:42
And so, if you look at the standards. So, we're doing NGSS standards. Some of you are not there's four components to the science right. There's the content standard, there's the modeling kind of part of it. So, if you look at those four components you have 150 kids. And then you look at the number of standards, there are for each thing in three years. What we're all supposed to get through the amount of time it would take to grade. Even if we divided it up by three years, each of those kids and all those standards, would be next to impossible.

April O'Donnell 08:19
I think it would also depend too, if you were reporting on all the standards.

Jason Brosnan 08:24
I just look at it from the standpoint of like what what's the one thing I don't I'm not I'm not trying to concern myself with whether all the standards got hit or measured or assessed. I just look at the thing I'm doing right now, this week and be like, what is it I want to measure, pick one thing,

Karen Drish 08:41
Yeah, but are we or are we not responsible for the idea when they finished the three years of being able to say that we've covered those standards?

April O'Donnell 08:47
I think we are but I think it changes when we're talking about reporting on it and so I think when you're reporting it, like if you like from the models I've seen of like standards-based report cards and stuff like that from other districts you're not reporting on every standard because it would be forever. And you're, you know you're narrowing them down you're making them more general so that you can touch on them in multiple quarters or whatnot. But it's not necessarily every single standard because I mean yeah if we looked at our social studies standards that would be a crazy thing to assess the entire year on. But if you can pair some together, generalize some and so then you've can report on those but yes of course you're teaching all of it still.

George Laird 09:29
so so so I guess the thing that the question is, will that happen yeah you know I mean I obviously there's certain teachers are going to go ahead and do that, teachers coming in if they know that they're going to be required to do and are we getting off the topic here already, you know, so so it just, if they know that these are the certain ones that they're going to hit you and I might try and hit everything but if they're going to be focusing and those particular ones do other things get lost and I guess that would be the question, you know, I mean, I guess it's for anything, you know with anything, but as we start to do that how does that affect my thing you know I come from a little bit different I want to be as open as I can and make sure that district ***** keeps the reputation that it's had for all these years. My thing you know like when I talked to high school people. They're not super happy about that we're doing this the people that I've talked to and they're pretty high up. Talk to elementary people and there's elementary people that have not been super happy about, you know, so I'm trying to take all that into account the goodness of what this could produce. And yet, talking to people at the lower and higher and, and, and I guess it kind of depends on who you talk to, but so you try to weigh that out and try to balance that too so

Kathy Carndon 10:50
you know, being when Dale was here and we did the whole thing with the science. It was a mess like how it came about it was, you know, but I really did like the standards-based grading. And I felt that it told us so much more about the kids, but it was hard because we also did great so we didn't do true standards based we did that and the grades and being a sixth-grade teacher, and we were the only grade level that was doing standards based, and the only, it was like the first hit. We got slammed as sixth grade teachers because we had both. And so it was, it was hard but you know my kids have standard based at their school and I love it because it tells me so much more about my kid as a learner than a grade does.

Steve Perkins 11:35
So I know, Karen you kind of brought up you know previous experience with standards based grading and then Kathy you just brought up having, you know your kid's school has that as well. Is there any anyone else have previous experience with standards-based grading in any form or capacity I know science for sure.

Jason Brosnan 11:51

Yeah, I have the same experience that they had where we, as a department made a push for it thinking that the rest of the school would be right behind us following us. And then, we looked over our shoulder and nobody was there and so we many of us let go of many of the things I, I still, I still take on some of the things that I learned from that, not necessarily doing everything that we did as a department back then

Karen Drish 12:17
I agree with you I take on some, I kind of followed with Greg, and, and maybe it's because we teach eighth grade. But we're hearing that 40 to 60 kids a year are hospitalized from anxiety as freshmen. And if we just give standard based grades with no grade letters. And then they go into the high school and they get something totally different. We're totally not preparing them. And I know some people in (neighboring district) have said that they are open to it. But the practicality is if you talk to the teachers in the district, they're not going to switch to it, there has to be a great point for people to pass on to college. So, unless the colleges are going to go with a new way of entering people, our eighth graders are going to get grades in high school so there has to be some means. And I love April what you said about the habits of mind. I have the habits in mind category, I'd like it to be 40 or 50% because I think somebody who works harder is going to do better in the long term then.

April O'Donnell 13:18
I know it's hard to measure because you don't know how much work I'm putting in at home and how much work I'm not putting it at home. Like, if you're measuring effort, because

Karen Drish 13:27
Well I'm saying on time, I'm saying they're doing like their work on time yes studying. Like, I have studied things that I can tell if they've done or

April O'Donnell 13:37
separate I would prefer an outcome, like the grades measure what you learned, even if we stuck with letter grades, I would still like a Habits of Mind category. So right so it was like, I would still like it separated out saying like, do they turn out, you know, so, do they turn on work on time, you know what I mean 4321 like sometimes always number, you know

Jason Brosnan 13:58
understand everything, but they're not doing, they're not they're not very mindful workers or they're working very hard, but they're not understanding things but let's separate them so it doesn't become a C minus for both of those people that are very different.

April O'Donnell 14:11
Right.

Karen Drish 14:12
I wouldn't care if they were separated as long as it wasn't 5,000 ways to report it with 150 some kids.

April O'Donnell 14:18
No. Yeah, no, I mean if you're just looking at reporting on you know four or five different things that's real quick, you know, certain characters and stuff later about that simple.

Steve Perkins 14:28
So what are the positives that exist in a standards based grading system.

April O'Donnell 14:32
I think that is the, for me, the biggest one is, is taking the habits of mind or the behavior the work ethic, all that stuff away from what they've learned. For me, that was my biggest moment when I started learning more about this was, why am I taking off points for a late grade? Like, obviously I want them to turn and things like time I want them to be responsible I want them to be responsible people but if I'm supposed to be showing what they learned. Why would I give them a lesser score, that that's where and that's where I saw the shift for myself.

Jason Brosnan 15:07
I saw that I, for me, I saw a change in my language about how I talked about an assignment to a kid. Instead of talking to them about the number of points they earned or you would have earned more points if you had done it this way, it became a conversation about what they needed to learn to do. And so, when I come back and hand, an assignment back to a kid my conversation is about the skill and about how to demonstrate that skill. and it doesn't have to do with points,

April O'Donnell 15:38
and that would make I think the learning objectives much easier for the kid to understand from the very beginning,

George Laird 15:43
they get more clarity out of me but I find it just refocuses me. It also refocuses me on what was it I was really trying to teach with that assignment. Every time I grade an assignment I'm like re, re confronting the idea that it's not about how many were right, but what does, what does it need to look like or what, how did they show me they learned it. Not a number of matter and counting the number of answers that were right or wrong but whether or not they are showing me. They understand the concept and so then I am forced to reconfirm it with myself, what is the concept I wanted to learn what are hard to teach and, and how what would it look like if a kid understood that. And so it makes my teaching better in the long run too

Kristi Parson 16:29
that was going to be my mind was just, I think it's going to shift the way we teach and so that might not be a very popular opinion. But if we're, if the kids are changing and school is school can change kids can change you know things can adapt so I just think that it will shift the way we approach things the way we talk to the kids the way that I don't know. And then, also, that being said because life is different now right so like when we go in the real world like, I'm not going to be talked to my administrator about how I have a 72% at doing my job but I'm going to have a conversation about specifically which standard of my position I'm not meeting. And that's what you're saying about real life and all that same, I just think it's more realistic towards future life, and it's a huge shift, but I think the positive is going to be in the way that teachers are in the way that kids might be effective long term.

Steve Perkins 17:23
Do you feel that other teachers in the building, see the positives in that way?

Kristi Parson 17:28
No.

Kathy Carndon 17:29
I don't think they understand it

Kristi Parson 17:30
That's exactly right.

Kathy Carndon 17:32
But it gives so much more information about the students as learners. And, yeah, I mean it's like you know every report card I get for my kid it's like there's a little paragraph about, you know, the weaknesses and how good they can, you know, and so, which is very telling. Just, you know, not just a letter grade it just really gives like they met this standard they didn't do this you know and then it's got a little paragraph about, you know what,

Karen Drish 17:58
okay. So, this is all changing it..

Kathy Carndon 18:03
But that's elementary

Karen Drish 18:06
I would agree that it makes you think really strongly, even if you're not doing standards-based grades because I'm not now but it's still like you look more at the standards when you're, but then you're saying that you know more about your kid. But then you take the letter grade away from it and again I teach eighth grade. And then they go and get letter grades, so I understand the lower grades maybe not being so focused on it but I got a harder time with the higher grades not being focused on it. But then, what do you say to the parents and this community because when we tried that experiment. It was a disaster. But we too were shifting between the letters and the back and forth but has anybody talked to our middle school parents and explain, because I think big problem when it goes to the community and all of a sudden, the letter grades disappear because my community neighborhood doesn't love it in elementary now so

George Laird 19:03
I guess for me that the math and science to me fit better with this. Just because I think that there's I think when you have the standards, I think it does fit better. I think the language arts and probably the social studies too For me, it's a little bit different, just because there's certain things that I think you do in LA and it's not always just, you know, there's things that you know that the reading of certain literature whatever it is and and the appreciation of it, the creativity that comes from certain things that maybe might not get a particular standard. Even in social studies I mean there's certain things are just you know there's their stories, there's things that go with that that might not necessarily be part of the standards and I would just, those are the things that I would hate to see lost. And so that that that was, that would be one of my biggest concerns is that, so we we focus on these standards and then some of that, the richer material is is lost. So as long as that doesn't happen, you know, whereas science and math, those standards are there and so everything about it has to be part of that. But social studies and LA for me I look at that a little bit differently so I understand what you're saying but I don't know how reporting a great as a percentage in LA makes it more rich. If anything, that seems like a

really big stretch to say that the best way for an LA teacher to report learning is a 72% you took you took that out of context I didn't say that. No, I said that by doing the standards I wonder if that how that's going to be, because when you give a grade you can give a grade based on a lot of different information not just the standard. So, we're instead of just focusing on a standard you focus on a wider range, and you're able to score those shows long as you're able to still score, other things. And so, make students still when we report it, you know, but we report the show so I'm okay doing that but I don't think it's so if we're just going to focus and say we're only going to be scoring standards things, I think you're going to lose some of that. Whereas maybe in your content you wouldn't do that and you think you guys probably would be better, better, but that's that's that's my thought. So that would be my concern that the focus would be so hit on those standards that we would lose some of the richness of, you know, some of these other things.

April O'Donnell 21:38
Can you just clarify so too so I think I understand a little bit better. Do you mean like can you give me an example of what you mean like like what would be lost?

George Laird 21:48
Well, I just think that that if we're going to as we're going through show we're looking at particular standards, I just think that there's certain things or certain things in the content that there's a richness to content, whether it be stories, whether it be you know there's just certain things that I think that there's richness to certain items that might not be a particular standard. And I think that it's still important to be able to you know be able to do that. And to make sure that kids are going to be, you know, adhering to whatever you want them to do. And it might not be a specific standard. That's all I'm saying. So, I you know, let's say that's, that's just a thought.

Steve Perkins 22:26
So that kind of goes to, I'm going to just jump around a little bit, but so what obstacles and I think you're just touching on a perceived one for sure what obstacles, do you think exist if the school here was to say I know we're at a stage at this building where we're looking to roll out standards based grading so the question is posed as if it's an, I guess, faraway nebulous item but what obstacles, do you think exist if we were to implement standards based grading here?

Karen Drish 22:58
Well first of all, we'd have to train our parents and get them, we give little yellow cords in eighth grade graduation. And those little yellow cords go away, you picking up all those phone calls. You know what's gonna happen, they're gonna go out of their minds that there's no honors cords when they graduate. And I hate the thing so I'm not even supporting them. I'm just saying. Right, that's what they're used to. We're a little jaded right now because we have a challenging eighth grade. But I'm not convinced I don't know what do you do with them when they're not working with the standards-based grades.

April O'Donnell 23:41
What do you do with them.

23:43
Right, so like right now you can say you can't participate in wrestling, if you're not passing your class. What do you do with standards-based grades when...

April O'Donnell 23:52
you have based on the habits of mind, like if you can't be a behavior of yours consistently scoring poorly on this no you're not allowed on the trip,

Karen Drish 24:00
but I'm just saying we don't have anything set in place for that, like, what does that look like we don't know we don't have.

George Laird 24:06
So we have to create.

Kathy Carndon 24:10
One thing that came up on our team is, what about like special ed kids. I mean it there, If they have the standards, and then all of a sudden it's like they're always like at that one level or two, they will they ever see growth, and I don't know that made me think I was like, Oh!

Karen Drish 24:26
Oh, well and if you go to Wormeli he'll tell you to just let them keep working on that standard the whole year. But I don't know how impracticality with 150 kids. You have three kids still working on one standard and other kids.

George Laird 24:45
And I think, you know, for me for doing social studies, you know, I think that, you know, going back to, to you guys with science and math. I think that there is a point where, you know, obviously it's some of that has to do with method and process but but in the end you want them to get to a point where they're figuring out a certain you know whether it be you know in math a certain equation that they're able to figure this out and stuff in social studies I think one of the things that we'll have to overcome or figure out is not just the, you know, whether they meet, or they're about to meet or whatever but like what do we do with the creativity part the higher level thinking of going beyond that, and trying to figure out things I don't know what the answer to that is, whereas you guys I think it does fit well. So we'd have to say figure that out so I just don't know about you know we've talked about these three levels like to me. There should be maybe a fourth level because that fourth level, you know, and I don't know that's probably going to be more work but I think that there are certain things that you know when you talk about it and you give options for things and students do, you know, so they might meet that standard but there's a certain amount of creativity and things that take them beyond, you know, just a 'Meets', You know, I think that, you know,

April O'Donnell 26:08
just for clarification for if you're not there, the, what the district is moving towards is three different levels. We did talk about for but just for everyone to understand. So, yeah, so we so right now it's looking at three different levels. So, to Greg's point, you know for that child that does go above and beyond or that child that does you know have extreme creativity in their own thinking like, will that shut them down. Is that an obstacle like well, what okay so if I just meet the standard like oh here, here's your. Here's your mediocre meet standard. Well, rather than pushing me further and letting me kind of expand my own mind a little bit,

Karen Drish 26:47

and going back to knowing the community, like well we did it before. We did exceeds which was another experiment here, but then you're going to have a lot of questions about well what if my kids above average and they just have meets and what are you doing to meet their needs and how, how are we addressing that when we put forward because, bottom line if, if we're going to do this. We have to sell this to the community that pays their taxes to us. We don't just get to do what we want.

George Laird 27:21
it is a good point because in *****, I think it is a little different than, than some districts and I appreciate like like what you're saying I, I get all that, I get it. But, but I, it did bother me a little bit when I heard that we're at the, you know, this three levels at that kind of bothers me I'm thinking, what the reputation that we have in *****. And I just, I don't know, I think that that could be a downfall moving forward.

Jason Brosnan 27:50
I have a couple, couple like mixed feelings about that issue and one is the, like, I feel like it depends a lot on what the standard or what the item is we're talking about because I understand the argument, there's no way to be exceed the standards on addition, you either know how to add two numbers together you don't have no I don't want you to be creative about that.

George Laird 28:22
And then there's others, there's other topics where that does work in that. But I, my, like, in answer to the like, would the kids push themselves my, my experience has been because there's a lot of things I've, when we started doing this, so many you know what nine years ago or whatever. One thing that went was to just not simply not grade everything. And my experience was instantly that that the things I don't grade on are the things that kids get most creative with. Because, because when you're not judging them. That's when they'll really push themselves to be creative and take risks, and so part of it for me was letting go of the idea of having to put a score in the grade book for everything I've assigned and and learn really quickly that that's those are the things that the kids do open up and get really creative on so I'm not I have no fears that not having a mastery level or not having a fourth level would stifle creativity in my classroom. I just, I'm accepting the idea that I would only be grading those things that were assessments, very specific skills, and you either can add or you can't.

Steve Perkins 29:35
So that kind of goes then to just our assessments, how do you think overall standards-based grading will work for your current assessments or just your assessment practices as a whole?

Karen Drish 29:48
We're starting a new curriculum in science so we don't. We're not exactly sure what everything's gonna look like yet,

Jason Brosnan 29:56
It would be a really good time to decide we were because like right now we don't have any assessments in that curriculum in the old curriculum I've been holding on to this idea and trying to test drive everything I could with it. You know, the. But, but with a new adoption Yeah, we are going to have to just re question it would be good to to agree that this is the direction we're going again. Before we go, getting too many old school methodologies in place again with it with a new curriculum and

Karen Drish 30:30
I want to go back to like you said you saw creativity. When I got going upstairs if I'm not grading it, they're not doing it.

Jason Brosnan 30:38
But that wasn't my experience with the same group of kids. So, I don't know what, what that's

Karen Drish 30:44
not all of them, but a number of them, I'm having a hard time getting them to do anything whether it's creative not creative. It doesn't matter. But again, for me it's being able to answer because we're always asked document, document Where's your documentation. How am I able to document all your child, I am supporting your child who has this ability to go above and beyond. And how am I doing that so yeah, I can do that in genetics I can have kids do the basic standards for genetics and then I can take kids who have somehow shown an extra ability and let them go off and do something extra. But it just is a lot of work to do that, and every like how are we going at what time are we going to be given to work on this. How's it going to be implemented how's it. How is the community who believe me we have you know that you pay taxes here I pay taxes here, we have really high real estate taxes so we really are accountable to the people who are paying our bills.

Jason Brosnan 31:47
I've heard that kicked around several times and really, I think I would hope that that's true of every community that the taxpayers are paying your salaries, you should feel responsible to them, ultimately, because they're there they've hired you.

Karen Drish 32:02
Yes they will stand up and hold us accountable.

Kristi Parson 32:12
Linconshire has a bigger reputation than we have ever had. of anyone today so they might be a piece to go off of.

Karen Drish 32:26
Well I'd love to know what there are all those Tiger moms that I've dealt with and science Olympiad, because those ladies are.

Kristi Parson 32:33
I have an answer to your question Steve about positive or not positive about assessment. Sure. I was in when I was teaching and we were moving we took all of our assessments that are currently doing and we sat with grade level teams across the whole district and sat together, and we tied the standard to each component of what we already assessed. We threw out questions we kept other ones. We argued, we were given so much time to do it, which is why when I say it now people are like, Huh, and I realized wow we did have the time, but I had a really positive experience with it because you had this in depth, well, why are we doing that one on that reading, and it was for all subjective math is easiest, because you could just bop bop bop up cross off this one but we did it for reading, reading readers workshop, Lucy Caulkins, which is what we're looking at.

George Laird 33:11
And that should be done no matter what. I don't care what it is that yet probably needs to be done. Regardless, I agree.

Kristi Parson 33:30
Yes, you can be done is what I'm saying is, I've seen it, and you have conversations

Karen Drish 33:36
But did everybody keep doing it, because we did that and then half the people we did it with threw it out the window and so all the time we spent doing it was like crazy. So it would have to be where administration steps in and says, Okay, we're giving you this time to do this but then you really have to do it. Yeah, not one group can go off half cocked and do whatever they want and the other group,

George Laird 34:01
I think the other thing to keep going back to what we said before, as far as I guess my biggest concern is to, you know two things with this. And if these two things go through. I'm great. So number one is to make sure that we would just maintain the excellence that we have here at in the district. And that can be done. The second thing is to not stress out a staff that is seems like the big word was stress when we had the, the words that were put up there, stress was a big word so as long as we can figure out a way that teachers can develop this, work on it, and then when we're actually scoring it, it's not going to take more time than you know what we're doing right now. I. That's awesome. That's job but that's the biggest thing and that I would think teachers who are against it would be that would be something that they would that's a hurdle. So if we can assure them that the process of doing this, we're going to have time to do it like Katie said that you had the process the time. So we have the time the process that's a big thing right off the bat so if we're working together, and we have time, which has not always been the case, if we can do that that would be huge, and then the actual implementation of doing this is going to be similar, better, or at least close to it i think that that will be another thing that if we can keep it there. I think that'll be huge too.

Steve Perkins 35:32
So that does kind of tie into the next one I think I already know you've been saying time. What would you want training or professional development regarding standards-based grading to look like overall?

Karen Drish 35:45
Well, what, what is the end result that we're expected to produce? Right, because I'm there has to be some standard way that parents can't get one thing from one subject and one thing from another. So there has to be some idea of what parents are going to.

April O'Donnell 36:03
They do they have it at the elementary school; I mean, it's it's you.

Karen Drish 36:06
I know I'm just saying whatever it is we need to know what that is and then time to sit with our grade level, and department people so that it flows between the two schools within the department. And who's doing what standards, that's ours we've done it already. It was brutal. And then, again, finally I agree with George if we can maintain excellence, and somebody can show me how to maintain the excellence with just the

mastery. I'm okay with that. But the one piece I'm telling you, I don't want to be on the 10 O'Clock News with parents, I, we have to when we did these kind of committees when my kids were in school here. There were parents sitting in this room, I was a parents sitting in this room with the staff, developing these things so that the parents were included in it because that way when you go out to present it you have people who have been a part of the process and understand it. I feel like we're really missing that piece by not including parents in it now.

April O'Donnell 36:06
I think the other thing too is I think you need to look at. Let the chance, like the staff really examine why they grade the way they do now. Why does a late grade, what does that show about what they know why are you doing that, like what the rationale, because when I looked at it, I'm like, I don't know why I'm doing it. Like it literally was just like this is just the way grades have always been and then you turn something late you got less credit for it. And so I think some of it is if you start looking at the why of their own practices now. Then you can kind of see maybe where you might want to change it, maybe where you might want to move forward. Once you understand why you're doing what you're currently doing.

Jason Brosnan 37:54
Like why, why does 90% always represent A work to us. It wouldn't in baseball a baseball player that can get on base 90% of the time is not an A minus baseball player and airline pilot that can land the plane 90% of the time is not an excellent airline pilot, you know we we have to question why did we come up with that number, why did we,

April O'Donnell 38:17
I don't think we should spend too much time but yes I think you need to be more introspective to start. And then from there, I just, yeah.

Karen Drish 38:32
So I think we did that already so we've already been through all that in the science department but I don't think it would hurt to do it again. But, but like I don't take off for late in the 90% category I give a separate Habits of Mind grade for that already because that's what I was told to do

April O'Donnell 38:50
right but it all gets reported as one grade then right?

Karen Drish 38:54
It has to because

April O'Donnell 38:55
that's what I'm saying. So like like

Karen Drish 38:59
but if you look at my Schoology, if you look at my power school you can see it's separated out so anybody who really wants to see how it's separated can look at it.

Steve Perkins 39:08
So what role does behavior have that in the grading process?

Jason Brosnan 39:15
only to the extent that it affects learning if they if the, if the behaviors are interfering with their learning it'll interfere with their ability to demonstrate learning. That's how I look at it,

April O'Donnell 39:24
And that's the correlation you would see that if it was separated out, do you know what I mean everybody recording wise, but otherwise.

George Laird 39:33
The question is, will giving a late score, motivate someone to then get the work in so that by getting the work in, they're going to do better? That's the question. So, and I, depending I guess on the student, it can or can't.

April O'Donnell 39:49
But I think if you for so if you separate it out and you make that actual so that late category if you're making that you know can complete work time. If you're actually pulling that out and that's a spot that's more motivating than the fact that I lost two points on

George Laird 40:07
I don't know i i wasn't saying one way or another. I'm just saying, per students as a defense. You know, I guess, you know like for me I try to think and you guys all probably do the same thing too, but you know sometimes you know, you got to be able to step back to and regardless of whether it's standards based grade or just regular grade, it's kind of like, in the end, like what what do we really want out of our students like like what's the real reason, like what's the real reason for doing any of this stuff, you know, so, you know, when we're talking about certain things, you know, World War Two or you know like I'd like what's the real basis like what do you what do you want them to do, to do through this you know and and I just, I don't want to lose sight of that regardless of whether we're doing grades or standards based grading. I think it's just important that we make sure that we continue to step back and think about that as a whole. So,

Kathy Carndon 41:01
And like, when I did the grades before I did Standards-based like I I did like grades but then after I did standards-based I'm like yeah what am I doing that and so I just I never give late grades. And, you know, I give them chance to make corrections to improve their score and, and, and it's the kids like it but, and I, and, but I get kids to do their work because because like the hotter kids do the work I'm like the oops slips like they say after, you gotta stay after you've missed three assignments stay after school. And that gets them was like okay you know and they get for, like, I don't have tons of kids that get worked on they realize my expectations and they and they do it, but it's not factored in their grade

Karen Drish 41:47
I think that's an age level thing, because by the time we get them in eighth grade they walk in and go 'Can we retake this quiz?' before they even took it without even studying for it because they figure, they can. And so we on our team have a rule that you cannot retake quizzes, but we tell them up front and we give them plenty of opportunities

Kathy Carndon 42:05
I'm talking about homework. But I do on quizzes, I do but they have to stay with me twice there's a whole expectation and all that and then tests they cannot retake.

Karen Drish 42:16
so we're flipped; we retake tests and not quizzes but, but either way. So, in my room. I just feel like some of it, we're not teaching them. I'm with Greg is the overall person so and getting back to you the overall grade does reflect the overall students so when we get evaluated on our performance as an employee. Our overall performance gets smushed together, right. So, in life, eventually, your habits of mind and your ability to do something, all gets smooshed together so I guess I don't care that much if we get one grade that shows all of it if people can see where their strengths and weaknesses are, but I wouldn't care if it was separated out either. It doesn't really matter that much to me as long as it's manageable.

Steve Perkins 43:06
So then what should. What should the report card look like? but it's again, if it's a standards based grading report card, what would that look like to you guys?

Karen Drish 43:16
It better not have like sentences you have to write about 150 kids, cause you can't.

George Laird 43:25
Yeah, no, I would I would expect it to be the list of standards you were intending to hit that follows followed by a descriptor one-word descriptor met did not need something of that nature. But, but a very descriptive sentence pretty, pretty standard not science, but able to. I would also like to see like "data and averages", you know I'm trying to think of an example but you know, able to do this thing.

Jason Brosnan 43:54
Yes, they can. They're getting there. No, they can't do it.

Karen Drish 43:57
Maybe go to trimester so you don't do it as many times a year,

Jason Brosnan 44:00
that would be helpful.

Kristi Parson 44:03
The quarters to how they we've been explained to and maybe it's gonna be different for us but how do you hit things certain quarters and other quarters I would love to see the whole year laid out. So even though you're not assessing during a certain quarter then as a family as a student as a teacher, you're still seeing the whole year and then we can you know what they say gray or black goes out. So you're still getting a full picture of how it might progress over the year so might only be three standards this quarter and the next quarter is four but that one's gone, but we're then there's this one for LA that's the whole year. So that, that shows the bigger picture I think that'll be important as a parent. More than anything, probably, educate parents I think that would help.

Jason Brosnan 44:47
So descriptor should be not assessed yet.

Kristi Parson 44:49
Exactly. And you can see which quarters and you can see like the whole year.

Karen Drish 44:53
And so the question that is like would it be overwhelming for a person to create.

Kristi Parson 44:58
I don't know, it's a good question. Yeah. And how many. And who is picking them?

George Laird 45:05
That's a great question who is picking them in the end I know we've talked about the idea that that we're gonna clump some together where can I kind of do that. And yet, the people who have been teaching for so many years or whatever and know this stuff that I'm not so sure that we're being asked about that. So we're we're not going to be involved so so that that's the question as to like so who's making the decisions on that so.

Kathy Carndon 45:29
I almost feel like I feel like there needs to be like a team piece like we can look at each kid, and almost have. I know you guys are going to hate me, but like almost have that writing piece where we do say something about the kids is like, that would make it a little bit more meaningful because if they just see a three two, one, what the hell does that mean like, I think there needs to be some more if that's the home base teacher, or we come together as a team and say hey, what can we say about this can our team and do it collaboratively maybe as a team and have like a click thing where you say, Okay, this

April O'Donnell 46:04
I know what you're saying i do i really do i don't think you're gonna sell a staff member on this, But I will say I think that's an important point though it's a clear descriptor of what what the parents are looking at so that they do understand what it is. So whether that's a sheet attached to it, you know, explaining you know what this quarter was in social studies, in science and this just a little thing, you know what I mean, This is what we worked on this quarter, just and you can have that preset for the year, just something so that way they have a little bit more information. Yes.

George Laird 46:38
So here's the other question then is, So at what point, and who makes the decision so. So when we make the decision that they had met this particular, you know, whatever, you know, whatever the standard is okay. So, who makes the decision as to. So if we have these three questions on a test and they get these three right. Check. They did it. Oh so or is it, or is it instead they show how many times do they have to so that that to me then becomes a bigger issue, because I love the idea that in my mind I'm saying that this is could be more objective than regular grades than being subjective, and at the same time, like so. How do we make that decision, and how objective is that decision. You know I love the idea that you say hey you know what, 90 percent where did that come from, you know, but then I might say well, who's that who's deciding that that showing it three times is the right thing and not two times or one time or 10 times, so it, I don't know what the answer to that is, but

Jason Brosnan 47:51
I would argue that you're uncovering the the very broad truth that probably multiple choice tests aren't the way to go for any of this anyway if we went to this style of grade reporting. I would look for a very different style of assessment to get there because I wouldn't I would be pained to say okay, he got nine out of those 10 questions right but the one he got wrong was a really bad was a really easy question that he should have

known it. And what do I say to that does that mastery is that proficient. What is that, what do I mean by that, whereas if I asked them to describe for me what happened in this test tube. I can get a real sense of whether they're there or not. And just simply just gauge, are there or not. And and ask myself that one simple question.

George Laird 48:44
Which is subjective,

Jason Brosnan 48:45
right, it is it absolutely is. It absolutely is but it's better than trying to be subjective about an objective test, you know like.

George Laird 48:52
Yeah. I hear you.

Karen Drish 48:54
From what I was told about standards-based grades, you're supposed to have at least three assessments, not three questions but three separate so like what you saw in the test tube and then something else and then something else in order to make the grade

George Laird 49:09
So is that the thing that is recorded or is that just you know what I mean so so I guess I was trying to think to myself, so we have said, yep. They're at meets the standard. And so then you have to accompany that with the three things that you tested them on or whatever it is. So I'm wondering like will parents want to say, okay, so why did they get that three? What did you use, and what did that look like my student, you know I like to get got a two. So what was it that you gave them?

Jason Brosnan 49:45
my response to that is, I hope that whatever we adopt doesn't look like threes and twos and ones because the parents will immediately turn that into a 66% and a 33% but if they're if they're descriptive enough words, if and and I'm specific enough about what the skill is, if the skill is to accurately measure a physical phenomenon. They can either do that or they cannot, you know, and so they are either proficient at measurement, or they're not, you know, and so it becomes a you know and and each assignment can be a Hey, this was an opportunity for them to measure something. How did they do on that they accurately measure what happened, or where the measurements off?

George Laird 50:37
So they do it three times.

50:45
Let's just you say you do it five times and they've done it four out of five times, good enough for you,

George Laird 50:50
depends on which one was the fourth. Okay, so so then they

Jason Brosnan 50:55
like it because, because if they if the one that the one that they couldn't do it on very well was the first one, they progressed to they got to show more unit. If the last one is their

cxix

worst example of measurement I'm going to really question What, what kind of learning went on for that kid.

Karen Drish 51:12
Can I throw another monkey wrench in there for you so while while we're doing the science standards or the social studies standards. What we know for a fact, on our MAP scores and our, ISAT, whatever they are this year IAR reading scores, is that our kids are not good at reading in the content area. So, then somewhere in the midst of all of this. We have to being sure that we're covering that skill as well.

George Laird 51:41
I just think that you know I might go back to this and and not by no means whatever say hey science and math just should do this and not social studies and LA, by no means, but I really do see like what you're saying, it makes so much more sense when I look at some of the standards that we have for the economics part and different things like that. I'm thinking to myself, like, I'm trying to figure out like how the heck we're going to show this on a consistent... like how many times we're going to do this, I am having problems myself looking at some of those, and actually thinking like how would I actually figure, you don't I mean, how will you know if it is very So, so I love the idea that the math thing and the science thing, it makes a lot of sense to me. And it sounds like, 'hey listen, you do this so many times and this, you know, in my mind, if it's gotten better, or at least four to five times or whatever' the social studies thing, that becomes a little bit trickier because it becomes just like it is right now but it is very subjective in that whether they've reached, you know, in their evidence or whatever it does become subjective, and I just say it's a different ballgame so and that's the thing that you know, just looking at the standards I've kind of freaked out just kind of looking and trying to think what the heck. Yeah my for me this is something that we back in the question about what are the what are the things in the way is, for me, I see this as like, like, how will we get, you know, like, each department, this might not necessarily optimize for each one, the same way. And, additionally because we just got done adopting a curriculum and it was not taken into account how we would be assessing when we adopted that would we go back and requestion well was, was this curriculum or that curriculum, easier to do a standards based reporting on, what would it affect, so it almost seems to me like it's something that would need to roll out one department at a time as they uncovered what it would what what their truth would be, and adopted a curriculum that was suitable to assess that, and all of that would be like it. I don't see it being a one size fits all thing, I, to me that's the biggest wall is how would it possibly be the same. Yeah, no I'm with you on that.

Karen Drish 54:13
You got planets, right, like, measuring densities one thing, explaining planetary motions another so we kind of have a mix because some are very easy and some are not.

Steve Perkins 54:24
So for sure the idea of 'can do it', and 'can't do it' that's a lot easier to separate out then the more subjective areas where we're talking. Are you able to explain the cause and effect of a conflict. And there's nuances to that, it's kind of what you're saying?

George Laird 54:41
Yeah it is it becomes super subjective in when you're doing that and you're trying to figure that out and then you're going back to what you said Jason so there are times where I have a student, you know that there might be a student that man five out of five times that we're doing this, they got it. And then there's sometimes you got students who

yeah that's it you know it might appear pretty good at certain points and maybe not others. But it all depends on where it comes in and so it becomes, you know, it's, it does, it's, it's going to be a little trickier in certain subjects so I appreciate Jay what you just said there because I really do believe that that might be the thing that might help everybody. If we think that it's going to possibly roll out in different ways and and look at it from different you know maybe that would be helpful I don't know and maybe it would be less stressful on teachers knowing that I don't know.

Karen Drish 55:31
But then you're going to have to explain different ways of it rolling out to a parent community.

Steve Perkins 55:36
So that kind of goes to, we've got two questions left. How would you describe this system, standards-based grading to someone outside of education? Whether that's community members who, when I when I say outside of education I know that can be difficult because everyone's been educated. But how would you describe that to someone?

Jason Brosnan 55:56
When I do open house and and not and i by no means am claiming to do pure standards-based grading in my classroom right now I'm doing the best I can do in the software I have. And in the environment I have which is another story. But what I the the baseball and airline pilot speech goes a long way with parents. I've used that at open house every year, and why I don't, try to narrow it down to just how many were right and wrong and give them a 90 or an 80 or 70. But then of course the software turns around and turns it into 90 and 80 and 70 for me after I put in mastery and proficiency. And so that's kind of undermines that...

April O'Donnell 55:57
Kathy at your kid's open house I'm assuming or you or your husband did go, like how, how was that explained to you guys?

Kathy Carndon 56:54
It really wasn't, it was, it was what the kids, kind of, they don't really talk too much about it but that's how their grades are,

April O'Donnell 57:01
Do they give you enough information or did you feel like you needed more?

Kathy Carndon 57:05
Yeah so like they have on their Report Card they have a little blurb about what what they targeted and it's highlighted and they have all this, the goals that they're learning objectives that are targeted and then it's got like you know their check marked where they fall, and that's got a paragraph at the end, it talks about like habits of mind it talks about you know their strengths...

April O'Donnell 57:27
So, it's a lot of this even in written format would be, I mean obviously you have to report the community but a lot of this if it was given. If you had enough information in front of you...

Kathy Carndon 57:36
Right. It was, it's very well laid out there's like a descriptor at the beginning and it's just very well laid out.

George Laird 57:43
What's the age range again remind me.

Kathy Carndon 57:46
It's elementary so it's K through 6.

Steve Perkins 57:55
So then, last question. What aspects of standards-based grading do you not feel comfortable with, or feel like you need to know more about?

George Laird 58:03
For me, the big like one big thing is, is to get information from districts who have done this for a while. And it's worked well at the middle school because elementary I get, I think there's a lot of districts that use in elementary, I love for middle schools I've been doing this for a while, and it's worked well. And they've kept it, to hear from from those from those people not for people who've done it for one year to year but people who've done it for a while. And, and are able to then explain kind of you know where the issues have been and how they got through it and whether it's more work less work or whatever, and really to hear them, you know i mean i think that's one thing for me I would love to be able to have that opportunity.

April O'Donnell 59:04
I agree with you and I think that would be helpful for the entire staff, even those who are, you know, thinking about doing it or have dabbled in it or are doing part of it. I just like to hear what were their challenges what were their successes. How could we learn from it, you know, said why reinvent the wheel if somebody else has got something that's working tell us about it!

George Laird 59:23
Because I want to hear that part because I've heard of districts that have done it, and gone back. So I've heard that part too. So I guess no matter what like for me, I just want to make sure that no matter what we do, we do it well. And that's the key and like that big picture, like I said before, What is that we want these kids to be able to like take away from this when it's all said and done, you know, and now we're going to continue doing that and that that's the key as long as we can do that for me that's the big, big part of it.

Jason Brosnan 59:56
I wouldn't mind seeing another district version of this I want what I have is what I managed to cobble together and what has kind of morphed out of the discussions we've had in department for years and years but I would love to see what what this looks like for somebody who has killed it and loved it. I want to see it without any, but the other question is like what am i concerned the other one is just simple like my concerns are much more concrete it's like the software. What kind of software can support this correctly, so that it's not overwhelming it shouldn't be overwhelming it should be very clear to look at a kid and say I know what kind of scientist, they are, and and a software that allows me to tell that story easily and quickly for 150 students. And then, and then the other concrete thing and the way is just simply that our current IEPS are not written

around the SBG they're written around percentages and goals that have to do with percents and goals that have to do a number of late assignments

April O'Donnell 1:01:07
They would need even more support than us.

Jason Brosnan 1:01:09
Those are legally binding contracts that would need to be rewritten so like if we adopted this like, Okay, what do we do to grace period in all the existing IEPs, so that we are not violating the law or violating the students' rights, but still working within the new system that we created. So like I have real concerns about just what exactly how how ugly does that look right, I don't know, I don't know what that looks like.

George Laird 1:01:23
It depends on whether we go by, whether it goes by department whether it goes by grade level, and what grade level goes first and, you know, because then yeah that sixth grade level, it could be the idea that as they're coming up from fifth grade to sixth that change would be made and then you're hoping that by the next year it's it could be done but otherwise you're right, there is a lot of work.

April O'Donnell 1:02:03
But the kids in elementary right now, they should come written in and come in as standards based, right.

Jason Brosnan 1:02:14
So what have we been doing with those guys since then?

George Laird 1:02:20
Well sixth grade I don't think they would be doing that because...

April O'Donnell 1:02:23
So I think when write for study writing or writing, middle school they're writing them in percentages.

Kathy Carndon 1:02:28
I think we need to have like a comment piece like that maybe it's the comments are in there but like the kids right now get a grade, but then they also get comments from us, as generic as they are. I think for this time space we can't just have the standards and that's it i think there has to be somehow like maybe we could do a quick generator something just so to make it a little bit more personable.

George Laird 1:02:51
But a lot of those are separated, those are separated from the actual standards themselves right because if you think about it a lot of those do with the other...

Kathy Carndon 1:03:04
That's the piece where we can, you know, talk about that

George Laird 1:03:06
It wouldn't go necessarily with the standards but,

Kathy Carndon 1:03:08
Not the standards but that's right, the habits of mind.

April O'Donnell 1:03:11
And Steve I know I'm jumping backwards for a second but something you said like, I don't know how it was worded but like, what would we need to do this for the staff or whatever I don't remember what the question was, or what hurdles we have in our way. I think that to understanding that was very hard for me to wrap my head around was understanding if something is measurable. So when you're like well he was putting a lot of effort. What measure do you have of that. That was very hard for me and I was like, Oh, we can't have that in there because you can't measure that. How do you measure how do you know how much effort I'm putting in, how do you know?

Jason Brosnan 1:03:47
I think very thoughtful. Yeah. but how do you know?

April O'Donnell 1:03:51
I think in educating the staff. Right. you know, that these are things that can be measured. I think would be really important.

Kathy Carndon 1:03:59
And I think we need to sell it, like right now there's a lot of blowback from staff like they're not happy about it.

George Laird 1:04:08
So here is the other thing too is that, like, I would feel more comfortable with, you know, and by the way, I just because I'm an old dog doesn't mean I can't learn new tricks so I I'll be all over this if we can figure out some of these things that we're talking about. But I still have, you know, I go back to some of these standards and I'm looking at and then when you say how measurable they are. I'm looking at a few of those standards and I'm trying to think how measurable are those in like, what is going to show me the on a couple of those like, what is the actual you know and and that worries me like it not anxiety thing but I'm just trying to figure out like how do we do that? Whereas like I say, I taught science for, you know, a while and I get that whole idea you know what I mean. And the math thing that makes sense to me. But the social studies thing for some of those is going to be more difficult.

April O'Donnell 1:05:04
Yes. And I think for that too. What do we need, I think that is having someone just help walk us through it.

George Laird 1:05:11
And they're certain things that are very easy to do. But then there's other things that are very very difficult and I have a feeling the LA stuff is going to be like that too. There's going to be certain things that hey, do they, you know, 'use grammar?' There's gonna be other things are gonna be a little more difficult and trickier too.

Jason Brosnan 1:05:30
And it begs the question that for me is like does do, are we do we have to just because we taught a standard does that mean we have to assess it, if we do assess it. You know, like because if it is something that is not necessarily measurable. It doesn't mean you don't teach it, it just means it doesn't necessarily need a grade in the report card.

April O'Donnell 1:05:50
I agree plus, we don't have time for, you know, to be grading 18 things.

Jason Brosnan 1:05:54
So focus on the things that are most measurable, and allow the other things to just get taught.

Steve Perkins 1:06:02
Okay, I have one follow up about staff blowback. So what's, I mean I obviously we can't speak for anyone else necessarily but what is it?

Kathy Carndon 1:06:16
I mean i think it's just, they were told, this is what's going to happen.

Steve Perkins 1:06:20
So what is, what is the general feeling?

Kathy Carndon 1:06:21
I just don't think they understand it.

April O'Donnell 1:06:26
Some did not have a good experience we had in the past, I think, sometimes the squeaky wheel is the loudest that is heard.

Jason Brosnan 1:06:36
It's like you're starting with questioning what you do. Before we get to that point, instead of presenting this I think it needs to start with the asking yourself what do you create, why do you choose to create it the way you do all those all those questions that you brought up I think that's the starting point that could walk them in walk them through the door on their own choice instead of being pushed through.

April O'Donnell 1:07:01
Yeah because yeah, cuz that's what got me to walk through the door

Jason Brosnan 1:07:05
Me too. I had a few hard conversations. Why points, why is a lab always 40 points, why is, you know, why is it this many points to do this and then many points to do that and like I'm like, I don't know, it's the number I've always used. I used that number my first year teaching and I haven't changed it; labs are 40 points, tests are 100 quizzes are 10. I don't know why,

George Laird 1:07:32
That that's the call. That's even something that he wants to get it right, going back to, you know, the big picture of what you're doing what you're trying to accomplish. He's the question is, you know, you're always trying to look at, you know, those type things regardless of what you know what we do with standards, make sure whatever. That is a great question as to why people are doing what they're doing, that should be looked at all the time no matter what.

April O'Donnell 1:07:59

I think unfortunately people need to be forced to be introspective.

George Laird 1:08:06
So we're, you know, so here's the here's the here's the thing though, when it's all said and done, you know, like me, I will take this on full heart, you know I do that. But I also know that, you know, my time here of you know after this year. Four more years and that's it. I just you know like me being here as many years that the pride I have in this district is enough that I want to make sure that whatever we come up with is going to go way beyond my lifetime, you know, I mean, but I also know that there are teachers here that are thinking, Hey, I got three more years left I got four more years of I don't give a damn what goes on. I just want to do what I'm doing right now, and be able to skate through. I agree, that is the issue that we're going to have because, because we're gonna have, you know, seriously you know what i mean, so we have a large amount of staff that are going to be out of here within the next two to three years, and how can we get them to invest. So that's the heart of this, so.

Steve Perkins 1:09:16
Well thank you. I think that that's all the questions. I really appreciate you guys.

Focus Group # 2 Transcript

SBG Focus Group #2 10/21/20
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SUMMARY KEYWORDS
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SPEAKERS
Steve Perkins, Ophelia Lukas, Diane Harvard, Kiley Drake, Kim Orion

Steve Perkins 00:00
The only, I guess, thing to know as I asked these questions is to remove any bias of me is essentially when I'm going through and you guys are kind of talking in this focus group format. None of my answers or responses to your answers will be in the affirmative or negative so I won't be agreeing with or disagreeing with statements you're saying I'm essentially going to be letting you, as a group, talk to each other hash it out and make statements ask each other questions if you'd like but I might ask some follow up questions but I will not be, like I said, affirming or negating anything you say. So, I might just come off a little bit different than you may be used to for me but that's just so when I because I have to then type up the entire transcript of this essentially in my paper nothing comes off as biased whatsoever, sound okay? All right. Cool. Well, let's get started. And I think with the zoom format we'll it might take a question or two to get into our groove. The point of doing a focus group via individual interviews is to allow some organic conversation. And it just might be a little bit less organic via zoom. So, you know, don't feel like you have to wait to know if it's your turn to talk we'll see just how it goes. Okay. All right. Well, let's get started. And I guess the first question for everyone is simply, how do you currently report student learning?

Kim Orion 01:49
Currently in science we have a four-level rubric system of their work for mastery, proficient, developing, and beginning. And we got Chris over at district office to put those codes in so we can put them in to PowerSchool, but because the school is still doing percentage grades, it takes that rubric score and converts it to a percentage, and pushes out a letter grade.

Steve Perkins 02:21
Others?

Kiley Drake 02:22
Yeah, so in PE we're doing something completely different because of the hybrid model and the remote learning. So we have lots of activities on Schoology for the students. And then they have a reflection form or exit slip that they have to fill out. We give them a series of questions. For example for yoga we asked them what was their most challenging position what was their most easiest and how did you feel how do you rank

it. Some of the two bottom ones are what did you struggle with what did you didn't struggle with, or kind of rank this or grade this activity. So that's something new because prior to that, the kids would show up and we would just give them participation points. Um, however we did get automatic feedback for when we were using the heartrate monitors, because we would give them a zone to to sustain their heart rate in, and then we would base their grades off of that off of their age and all the research that we had were shared with.

Diane Harvard 03:24
For Spanish prior to this year we would only take scores from formative and summative assessments. Homework was for skill practice only. However, in the, in the remote learning in the hybrid model we've had to allow for points for homework during this time because we were too afraid that on the assessment, they would be completely cheating. So, you know, it's going to transition like next week, when the kids are in class, they'll be taking a paper/pencil. And we'll go back to, like, little to no grades for homework. But that's just for this year.

Ophelia Lukas 04:16
We've done a lot of self-reflection in the past. Starting now that the band is finally doing able to go this year, we're starting to do more of the self-reflection and on their playing ability, and not just if they're at a high level, but are they improving and can they recognize their mistakes if they've made any and what they need to improve on it, so it doesn't necessarily have to be a flawless performance. But if they can recognize how they can make themselves better.

Steve Perkins 04:54
Okay. So, just to just to piggyback into the meat of the main topic because the first question covers student learning, and progress as a whole. But ultimately this specificity is about standards-based grading. And a lot of what you guys have been talking about can lend itself to that but I guess just to start a baseline. What do you know about standards-based grading, in general?

Kim Orion 05:27
That you're assessing like students' skills, like there are certain standards for each subject and you're assessing them based on those standards. So you can't assess them on things like creativity and neatness and behaviors basically you have to like grade them for like, demonstrating the learning and how well they're able to meet that standard.

Diane Harvard 05:49
Exactly. Habits of Mind are completely separate. But my understanding is students can take and retake and retake assessments until they feel they have mastered the skill at any time.

Kiley Drake 06:06
Yeah, so when we read rewrote our stick well that rewrote but when we did our curriculum mapping the last couple of years. We can reformat it to if we do go into standard- based grading it is broken down by standard by skill level for individual grades sixth seventh and eighth.

Ophelia Lukas 06:25
Band did the same thing when we worked on ours.

Steve Perkins 06:30
So, Diane you were talking about that retake and retake what uh what are your thoughts on that?

Diane Harvard 06:49
But I feel like students won't be motivated enough. I feel that I'm still the thought that grades are still highly motivating for quite a few students. So, I have found in the last few years since we've allowed quite a bit of retakes in other subjects before the quiz even hits the desk, they're like 'well I'll just take the retake'. They don't even try. The effort isn't necessarily there because they know they can just do over do over do over in certain classes.

Steve Perkins 07:26
Have you guys heard similar?

Kim Orion 07:31
We do allow retakes in science but I think it was Rick Wormeli that said like you, you can offer retakes but it doesn't have to be instand it can be in the confines of like reality for instance, you can't retake assessments from like the first quarter if it's like the marking periods already over. Or, for instance, like for a test we shouldn't be expected to rewrite, you know, six versions of a test so they could try it six times. So you'd like have to have stipulations around it, but you provide them an opportunity to demonstrate and learn the material, but it's not necessarily like being in an infinite cycle of retaking like in science, for a homework assignment, a video assignment, in a sense that we enable six attempts because after that they're just like they didn't watch the video they're just like guessing at the answers but the way it when they run out six attempts, they can get more but they have to talk to us like maybe they like deeply don't understand or misinterpreted the entire thing and that's why they needed. They keep on getting it wrong after six attempts, or they will actually have to fess up we have to talk about like their students skills if they actually didn't watch video and you're trying to guess the answers and realizing that things a lot more time, so

Kiley Drake 08:46
I get that the retake may be what you want to get the kids to master this skill. However, I don't know. I like what Kim said with the six retakes but then, like Diane said, so they're not prepared those take a retake while there, I didn't prepare I'll just take a retake, I guess I don't know what the what the kids philosophy is or how that motivates them to want to master it the first time when they know they have multiple chances to try to succeed. So I guess I'm confused with the amount of retakes that should be allowed because I don't know if you're just like, if it's just procrastination on the students on their skills of studying. Um, I don't know, so I would need more information of why the retakes why they're so pro retake in the standard based grading.

Steve Perkins 09:37
Thank you. Um, let's go back to just the the base of the question too because it is kind of the the core thing what, what else do you guys know, just about the core principles of standards-based grading? I know Kim you would kind of given your summary of what it is could anyone else explain your, if you were to just kind of be given a definition to say someone outside of education, what would you explain standards based grading as?

Kiley Drake 10:08

I think it's just, it's, it's, it's better feedback maybe in a way to, to, to share with the kids on what skills they have what they're developing, or they're, they finally have mastered the skill, which then spirals to the next unit or the next level, whether it's eighth grade to high school or as freshmen sophomore, I don't know, I get it. That's what it's about. As far as their skill level. I know, Diane mentioned something about habits of mind. God that was so long ago I really don't know too much about that I know like for from a PE standpoint when I've gone to these conventions and conferences where they talk about standard based grading. To me, it's forced it's it sounds like the same thing that we're doing already but instead they're giving it a checkmark instead of a point value. So, I guess that's what I know that I need to know the difference between the point value and then just like yes it's a check or a minus or something like that.

Steve Perkins 11:12
So, then I guess, you know, post the knowledge and I'll tell you explain kind of the perceived positives there but what are some positives in a standards-based grading system. I know, Kelly you had said feedback but any others in terms of just why standards-based grading in the first place?

Diane Harvard 11:32
Um, well for Spanish what's nice we have our, you know categories broken down by the modes of acquiring a language. And so what's been nice in the last few years is that I've been able to sit down with a parent at conferences and say hey listen, you know, you are really good at answering questions in, you know, interpersonally, but you have a real hard time reading Spanish text and answering in English, so like every assessment we give we break it down by by the mode and so like these five questions have to do with this mode and these five questions because this mode or whatever, then they get multiple grades. So, that's what that's what's helpful to me like that. I can pinpoint exactly what area, they might need help in. And Maddie says hi by the way.

Steve Perkins 12:33
Okay, how about the role of behavior in the grading process what role does behavior playing grading?

Kim Orion 12:40
It shouldn't like we're talking about like their actual skills that we can grade their behaviors, like, um, their behavior can affect their ability to acquire the skills but you measure the skill itself.

Steve Perkins 12:57
is that happening, though?

Kim Orion 12:59
What do you mean?

Steve Perkins 13:00
I guess in, and others feel free to chime in too but I'm just wondering if that's an idealized view, or if that is being done at South, or in our school or districts I just I'm curious to know kind of where, if that's everywhere?

Kiley Drake 13:22
I think that's difficult because I'm, like, we're such a performance based. So, if a behavior is just complete defiance, or they're taking participation away from themselves and

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others. Sometimes I do think that that needs to be deducted from their points because they're them themselves they're not on task I just find that to be if their behavior gets in the way of their performance that they're just off task. I think that's different in my setting, because we're such a performance space as far as participation goes and movement and activity.

Ophelia Lukas 14:01
I would have to agree with Kiley since band is performance based also, that if somebody is not doing their part, well, or being part of the group, that they're ready to take everybody else down with them. Because a band is or an orchestra is only as good as its weakest member. So the idea is for, for all of the students involved to help each other and elevate each other.

Kiley Drake 14:38
I wouldn't say that necessarily for Spanish. Because we have, you know, a typical school year we have so many activities crammed into a class period. I don't, I don't really see it. I don't deduct points or anything for behaviors I'll just say that I don't know if that answers a question or not well enough.

Kim Orion 15:01
And I guess in terms of behavior a lot of it is natural consequences in a way like if a student's behavior is procrastination. Their work is going to start backing up on them and they, they might not be able to like demonstrate their knowledge as well because they chose procrastinate or if the students consistently tardy, they can miss instruction, as a result.

Steve Perkins 15:32
So, if we were, and I know, Kim you talked about implementing aspects of of SBG in PowerSchool already but if this was to be fully implemented school wide, standards-based grading practices, what obstacles, do you think exists towards implementation?

Kim Orion 15:54
When we tried it out a couple years ago it was way before you got here and they had the science department only doing it for some reason, that we had to put out regular grade plus a standards based report card that we had to pass out to all the teachers to put into report cards but like the hardest thing was like on a test you had to like break up the tests based on standard, because you had to pick like this question goes along with this standard these couple questions address that standard, so it was like the grading got really convoluted because like if you have a lab of several skills in it you can't put in one grade for that lab, you would have to break up all the different skills or you would have to cherry pick okay they're doing this entire lab but then I'm assessing this one skill so potentially on that lab they can like, get a really high score, even if they did lousy on on the other aspects so you because you can't have like something that's. Um, with like many things going on. It's like you have to cherry pick and focus on one skill at a time.

Kiley Drake 16:56
Now for me are like I had already mentioned we already, you know, each quiz has different, I guess standards, I loosely not specific standards but just the modes of communication already on it and then we put the separate scores up at the top so that's not the issue for me, for me it would be more getting the students to buy into putting in the effort and, and we have so many students without that intrinsic motivation like what's, what's the point of it if they're not getting any grades and they're just getting a 'meets' for

things so if that's the designation that we choose or whatever, whatever verbiage would be used on a report card is just meet. What's the point, and I think my issue with that too is that we have so many kids that 'meet'. Is that a high 'meet' or a close to exceed or, you know, you just did the bare minimum but you did complete the standards that you needed to so you're you get the same grade as somebody else, it's kind of like when teachers get rated as proficient. And, you know, you might get a proficient and you go above and beyond, but you didn't meet the standards they're looking for for Distinguished. But then you look at some of the people that maybe you've worked with in the last 20 years for example, and you know that they also get proficient, and they are lazy. Just as an example.

Steve Perkins 18:30
Any other obstacles?

Kiley Drake 18:33
I think the obstacle would be you have to really educate and because I think everyone's still going to be comparing the mastery to an A or a proficient to a B or meets meets or exceeds or something like that. I think that's that. When does that become what one does that separate?, because I think that's because that's where the norm is right now is the letter grade is that they're going to compare their distinguished proficient to an A and a B or something to that matter.

Kim Orion 19:06
And I feel like when we do implement it from my experience it's like they just got to kill a letter grade completely they can't have like this weird transient existence, with letter grades and standards grades, because it's just confusing for the parents and that's the other obstacle is like parents are raised in a system with percentages and letter grades it's harder for them to like buy into it, but because they had it in the elementary school. I don't think it would be such a big deal, as much anymore, as it used to be.

Steve Perkins 19:35
How do you think a standards-based grading system will work for your current assessments that you give?

Kiley Drake 19:45
I find that I will be assessing, all the time, because we have so many standards and we have the three grade levels that I just feel like that's what I would be doing constantly was being assessed. That's on a daily basis, you know, seeing them five days a week and if we're doing this unit. We can be assessed on throwing forever we can be set on striking forever. To me, I think it's just, it's a lot.

Ophelia Lukas 20:12
I think a performing arts group lends itself to the standards-based grading. So, in some aspects for me I think it would be easier.

Steve Perkins 20:29
And then, as we look at possible implementation in the near future here. What just overall aspects of standards-based grading, and you may not have all of it down and that's okay but what aspects, do you think you would not feel comfortable with, or you would need to know more about prior to implementation?

Diane Harvard 20:55

Retakes. Is that there gonna be a building requirement, a district requirement? Or if we can just say no. That's important to me because like I said earlier in the, I do look before the death, the paper even hits the desk like 'Hey, is there, you know, I'll just take the retake' or 'I was busy last night I'll take the retake'. No there isn't a retake, like, and I get it, because, you know, I wish I had retakes in some life skills or life things, and, yeah, just, you know, it's one Spanish quiz in your history or whatever, I get it, but I just think sometimes this is the wrong message to kids like about retakes because life doesn't always offer retakes. That's just, that's my obstacle.

Kiley Drake 21:51
My obstacle would be providing evidence to support my grade or my meets exceeds or whatever it is. I think, having 125 kids, I think elementary is different because they have you know they have 20 to 25 kids in their class. And I know they have multiple subjects that they teach, but I think my obstacle would be the amount of students, and the, the, providing of evidence that shows that they met are they even because I think right now we are very subjective. So I would need to prove that the evidence that they are meeting that or they did Master, A, B and C.

Diane Harvard 22:39
 I think another thing for me is just, I have a hard time with it being an eighth grade teacher his kids have been assessed by standards forever and ever and ever and they're going to the high school that's purely letter grades. I think that setting, kids up for disappointment. A lot of them probably the majority of our population. If they've never received a letter grade before going to high school where it truly air quotes, counts. You know what I'm saying. So for me, if they're going to a high school that is not also standards based, I think that's just something that is difficult.

Kim Orion 23:22
I was gonna say I think the technology plays a role too because the people who write grade books are not teachers. So like the one like when they say they're going to implement standards based grading and the person that's you know peddling their types that their online gradebook program or whatever, says oh yeah it works with standards based grading ultimately it doesn't really work well, you know, because those people, those programmers aren't teachers and they wouldn't think our teacher would about reporting grades.

Steve Perkins 23:53
So if we were to move forward with implementation what sort of training or professional development regarding SBG, would you want and what should it look like?

Kiley Drake 24:08
Well I know for me I would really want a successful program that's already up and running, because like I said when I went to our PE conferences, they always have workshops on it, but you sit there you're like, well this is it just putting, it's the same thing they're doing they're just putting giving it a different name and the process is not different, which I feel that you're looking for the process to be different and to look different. So I would really need to see a successful program, how they assess their kids. What, what evidence base they're using what what checkmarks what standards all that stuff, and how they're successfully do that especially in the middle school you have 125 kids, and three different grade levels.

Steve Perkins 24:57

Others?

Ophelia Lukas 24:59
I would definitely want specific examples of how it would be expected to be carried out. And because like Kelly said before about being subjective everything can be subjective no matter how carefully things are worded so seeing, and having examples, or proper examples, or maybe even improper examples to know what not to do. I think that would be very important.

Kim Orion 25:34
Yeah, I guess like one of the tricky things when it comes to standards-based grading is like trying to separate and provision things out in an assignment or an assessment a child's doing like for instance when we did CERs a lot, you got a kid that kind of can communicate ideas of the science that they clearly understand but then they like their writing is completely atrocious. But then it's like I'm not an ELA teacher so I don't want to like think they're graded on like their communication skills, because the science content is there but then it obviously isn't on par with someone who's able to smoothly communicate so like where do I set the vision, because I don't want to treat it like a piece of language arts, writing but I also, it's also not really good science writing but they understand the science concepts when do they get it so that's the tricky part for me.

Steve Perkins 26:23
So for grading just based on standards like Kim saying at what point does does grammar, not matter at all then if a word problem answer is still got the correct answer?

Kim Orion 26:36
In the past, if it's been really atrocious. I just like, give it back to the kid and refuse to grade it until it's like some, like, up to par in some manner and just refuse to graded. And that usually then usually they will be forced to fix it, even if the contents there but it's like, I can't understand it because of their terrible grammar and then I give it back.

Diane Harvard 27:00
I think for me, I would want to know whether or not, every assessment has to provide evidence for for the standards or if it's just this assessment might have different standards on it but I'm only going to pick and choose this question or that question, etc. I think more specifics on, not on the actual execution of how to make it work.

Steve Perkins 27:26
So if there's an assessment that you've been doing for years that maybe doesn't hit some of the ACTFL standards for world language. What do you think about that assessment, going away all together?

Diane Harvard 27:41
Um, well it would just depend because I'm well, this is hard because I, I've been a little bit on the inside, for the standards-based grading committee. All right, so it's hard honestly, I mean how do you want me to answer because I've been on the inside and the standards-based grading committee or do you want me to answer?

Steve Perkins 28:41
There's no. It's however you want I don't want you to think that you need to answer in a way that I think I need to hear. I want your real opinion if you have an assessment that you have given for 20 years you really enjoy it maybe it's a pretty fun activity, but maybe

it doesn't necessarily hit standards that as a district or a program provided like it doesn't hit it, do that.

Diane Harvard 29:05
Give it. I would honestly still give it. And, you know, like I said, I don't know. Do we I think somebody use the word cherry pick and that's a great, great way to put this we cherry pick was what goes towards their standards-based grade because I was under the impression we needed, like three pieces of evidence for each standard per quarter, so I could give 15 different quizzes. But I'm only really looking at these three questions for this mode for this quarter. You know what I'm saying. So, I would still, I would still give it because there's value in, in some of the culture stuff that never really gets covered by a standard.

Steve Perkins 29:58
I, you know, and I think that does go back to the obstacles tough thing is is, I think, with some staff if they're not aware what standards their current assessments already have in there. Um, so we're down to the final two questions, and I'm going to switch the order a little bit but. So as we look at standards-based grading, what we're actually grading on to switch gears to the reporting process. What do you believe a report card should look like that is based on student's learning standards.

Kim Orion 30:48
I can relate to my kids like preschool report card I like how it's format that it says like the skill and then it just tells me like, where she ranks if she's like needs the skill or needs improvement and so forth so I just imagined that there'll be a standard stated and then like where they rank like keep it simple because of the parents get a report card that's like, you know, like a several pages long, they're not going to read it, it needs to be something that is clear to a parent and the student that they don't have to like spend an evening sitting there trying to interpret it.

Diane Harvard 31:23
So Kim does that mean you would eliminate exceeds?

Kim Orion 31:28
I've been talking about that we're thinking about that we might pass that we're thinking about it a bit because we do have four, we have mastery but it's it's kind of hard to find the cutoff between like proficient and mastery. So we're thinking, and I think that when the district adopts it, I don't know as an elementary school is at three levels in the elementary school. I think we were for like getting rid of the highest level and keeping it at like something like proficient, developing, beginning.

Kiley Drake 31:59
I like what you said Kim about, you know, with the reading and then math, I think, when my kids were in school, you know obviously they weren't doing standard based grading, but it was nice to know where they were, what their strengths were and what their weaknesses were and so when the weak with the weaknesses. You knew that, you know, that's where they needed to have more practice or more help with. So I think the feedback is good with that I do agree with that to let them know specifically what their weaknesses and their strengths are.

Steve Perkins 32:36

Anything else that the report card should maybe look like? What about the teacher and as opposed to, I like thank you Kim for giving kind of the parent and but what about the teacher and in terms of the possibility of lots of feedback.

Ophelia Lukas 32:54
I often think less is more. I would also like to see that if we move towards, or if we move to the standards-based grading report card. I would like to see it reflect the elementary schools so there's similar throughout.

Diane Harvard 33:19
I was gonna say like I'm trying to I was trying to visualize what that would look like like if I have this assessment and then these like other assignments or labs that, like, assess the standard like will the grade program take it and somehow, like, figure out like how well they met that standard or do I need to sit there and look at it and kind of figure out how well they met that standard that's the thing is like that's what I'm concerned about like how would the grade program actually function and figuring that out. Like is it going to be work on a teacher on that I have to look at okay I did this standard these 10 times and now I need to figure out how well the kid met the standard or something. That was my point exactly i don't think you'll have a whole lot of teacher buy in, if we have to sit with, you know, 150 papers and go through okay question three is what we're going to use for, you know, for this standard on this one and question five on this one and try to go through and and figure it out on our own if the grade program can come up with a way to make that happen. I think you'll have a whole lot more buy in from staff because to be honest with you, the more work to make it happen you're not going to have it. That's just me.

Steve Perkins 34:34
All right. So, last question. And this is kind of tying back to what do you know already about standards-based grading and just even telling others or showing others about it, maybe outside of education. If you are and this one I'm okay to do a round robin if you'd like. How would you describe standards-based grading and reporting practices to someone outside of education?

Kiley Drake 35:09
I think it'd be based on specific skills that the kids are working on or mastering to get them to the next level I think it'd be it. I think it's very more specific than just giving a letter graded actually tells them what skills they are doing. That's that would be the only thing because I'm not educated enough on it. So if I was talking to a complete stranger about it that's not in education, that's what I tell them that would be better feedback on what the skills. And again, I'm going to go back to strengths and weaknesses

Kim Orion 35:44
I was gonna say something similar that it takes like a particular skill of a subject area and informs, the student and the parent about how well that kid was able to meet that particular skill. So for example if it's like the ability to collect data versus like understanding Newton's laws of motion. So there are two pretty different things. So instead of putting it all together in one big grade, it actually will separate out the skills. So a student can see like their development and your learning.

Ophelia Lukas 36:23
I think it would explain the concepts and the materials that the students should be knowing should be knowing at that particular point of their educational career.

Diane Harvard 36:46
I think it is performance assessment of particular identified pre-identified skills for a unit of study, during a period of time. In the absence of student' skills. No, executive, you know, no Habits of Mind skills included it's pure performance.

Kiley Drake 37:17
No, I was just wondering, is if you say like it. It doesn't force the memorization. And the kids, like they memorize it and they forget about it, they're actually being able to apply what they notice to other things.

Steve Perkins 38:11
That's like a desire, you're saying that's a desire you have from standards-based grading?

Kiley Drake 38:18
I think so is like the lack of memorization it's a skill that they continually to use for other subject areas of they're just further along like they said it's like a scaffold you just keep building off of that rather than memorizing it and forget about it never have to use it again.

Steve Perkins 38:45
Okay. Any other thoughts overall in general. As we look towards the possibility of implementing standards-based grading?

Diane Harvard 38:58
Um, for me, just something that I have thought of along the way. When I first learned that this is perhaps the way that we're moving in a direction we're moving. I find it disheartening, as a mother of a perfectly average child and then a gifted child that some of the things that a gifted child could do, would not be noted, necessarily.

Kiley Drake 39:33
That's a good question just standards-based grading show differentiation? I mean are you able to do that, because if it's just a skill thats met, I mean, other other skills that they could be doing once you meet that I don't know I guess that the question for a classroom teacher doesn't allow for differentiation?

Steve Perkins 39:54
Kim maybe you can speak to that more

Kim Orion 39:58
I mean with the way we have it set up now yes, like the four rubric system but I guess like, how do you assess what mastery is? So mastery, basically, unfortunately, and I'm not really super because I can't think of a better way to do sometimes if it's like a multiple choice there's multiple choice not something you would really want to do for standards based grading but still kind of a reality because of time consuming to do like free response, but like if it was like an A we've been calling it mastery, because they obviously understood the skill well enough that they can, they can probably teach it to other kids is how we sometimes phrase it to them. Um, but yeah, that's the part I'm not really satisfied with is like how do you implement it in an efficient and smooth way to

reflect differentiation but also just like the grading aspect about how do you deal with that. And you have 135 students.

Kiley Drake 40:49
Well, and I'd like to see some consistency too among teachers because, you know, just like with everything else, everyone kind of does it their way. So I just, I would think this would have to be have some definitely consistency to the process and to the, to the grading aspects of it.

Kim Orion 41:11
Yeah, I guess the thing that stresses me out about it, if we were like to do it in a really authentic way. It would be really hard to pull off with 135 kids. Yeah, because that wouldn't mean like to really show deep understanding it could be through writing or something or, and then that means you're constantly grading 135 essays, and it, we try we did that in the beginning of IQWST and it nearly killed all of us.

Steve Perkins 41:39
You were being asked to grade essays constantly?

Kim Orion 41:42
Yeah, they would they constantly want us to be grading like these like paragraph responses at the end of every single lab. But, you know like, la teachers they have half as many kids so they would be able to do that but then science we were like every week getting like, even if it's like the paragraph but it's like 135, every time, and it was, it became extremely grueling. So we, there are certain things that we just had to step back on because it's hard to. So on one hand it's like, it could be more authentic i think but on the other hand it's also what's good so it's less practical.

Ophelia Lukas 42:18
I don't think an essay necessarily shows that you will understand because there are people like me where I don't often think well with words but I think in shapes, and ideas and images. So, an essay wouldn't show what necessarily what I know, on the subject, if I mastered the skill, I would have to prove that skill.

Kim Orion 42:41
I know I'm more thinking about that as opposed to like a multiple choice test which is, you know, I think like multiple choice tests, it's more efficient but it also doesn't demonstrate knowledge as well. Some kids are just good at taking tests, what we have been doing we are starting to do now with learn because we adopted a new curriculum we're killing off multiple choice tests me and Jay, and we're trying to do everything as a lab practical assessment and stuff. But again, it's hard to, it's hard to pull it off.

Steve Perkins 43:13
Okay. Okay. Well I think that's all I've got guys. So thank you, really, really thank you so much because this is essentially the meat of what my dissertation is going to be based off of his perceptions and just ways to move forward with standards based grading. So I hope I didn't bias things too much but we're all, I think we're all good. Oh, all right, yeah I really, I really appreciate it. All right. Take care guys. Bye.