

GRADING AND ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

1 RESULTS

The Athens Area School District recognized an issue with its current grading system and decided to form a grading and assessment committee made up of teachers and administrators to address the issue. The grading and assessment committee met on several occasions. The committee was divided into two sub-committees, the assessment and homework committee and the grading committee. Each committee spent a large amount of time gathering data, looking at research, and reporting results that would be in the best interest of our students. The assessment and homework committee defined the four types of assessments, defined homework, and made a recommendation on how students should be graded. The grading committee looked at how we should grade students and of what a student's grade should consist of. The committee decided to improve upon the existing grading policy grounded in research and best practices. Both committees came to the same conclusion and together formed a new philosophy and mission statement in which Athens Area School District has chosen to abide by. The following information is the new mission, guidelines, and practice that the district shall follow;

Grading and Assessment Committee Mission Statement:

To foster a culture of growth through a standards-based system of grading and assessment that holds all stakeholders accountable.

We believe in...

- Meeting the needs of students on an individual basis
- Timely and reflective feedback
- Multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate success

Assessment Definitions:

Mastery: Mastery will be defined as achieving at least a 70% on any given task or assignment.

It is important to note that our current system of how we define summative and formative assessment **will change**. At least one benchmark grade per week will be entered into the grade book with the goal of 3 assessments per nine weeks. Assessments should be based on standards-based learning and it is encouraged that teachers transition toward more use of project-based assessments.

Summative Assessment – seeks to make an overall judgment of progress made at the end of a defined period of instruction. Assessments may occur at the end of a school level, grade, or course, or administered at certain grades for the purposes of state or local accountability. Summative assessment measures the extent to which students meet, fall short of, or exceed the expected standards. Keystones and PSSAs are examples of summative assessments.

Formative Assessment – classroom-based assessment that allows teachers to monitor and adjust their instructional practice in order to meet the individual needs of students. Formative assessment can consist of formal instruments or informal observations. Results should be used to shape teaching and learning. They may encompass questioning strategies, active engagement check-ins (such as response cards, white boards, random selection, think-pair-share, think-ink-share, popsicle sticks for open-ended questions, and numbered heads), and analysis of student work based on a set of rubrics and standards **including homework and tests**. Assessments are considered formative when the information garnered is used to adapt instructional practices to meet individual student needs as well as providing prescriptive and corrective feedback that allows them to reach set goals and targets.

Diagnostic Assessment – ascertains, prior to instruction, each student’s strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills in specific academic areas. This information allows the instructor to remediate students and adjust the curriculum to meet each pupil’s unique needs. Examples would be a pre-test or the Woodcock Diagnostic Reading Battery.

Benchmark Assessment – provides feedback to both the teacher and the student about how the student is progressing towards demonstrating proficiency on grade level standards. Well-designed benchmark assessments: 1) measure the degree to which students have mastered a given concept; 2) measure concepts, skills, and/or applications; 3) are reported by referencing standards, not other students’ performance; 4) serve as a test to which teachers want to teach; 5) measure performance regularly, not only at a single moment in time.

Definition of Homework:

Homework is a formative task, intended to impact the learning curve, and used to preview, practice, and prepare a student to lead them to mastery of standard and concepts. Homework may be graded if it is based on previously learned material. Homework will be checked for completion if it is not based on previously learned material.

Each class syllabus should describe the homework policy for that class including the purpose and focus of homework and how it will be assessed. Measures should be taken to ensure that the amount and type of homework is appropriate to the developmental level of the student and is differentiated based on individual student needs. Teachers are expected to communicate weekly in PLC’s to ensure that students are not overburdened.

The following guidelines should be adhered to:

K-2 – 20 minutes of reading a night

3-5 – 20 minutes of reading and no more than 20 minutes of additional homework

6-12 – Generally no more than a total of an hour of homework per night

Calculation of a Student's Grade:

A student's grade shall be calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Grade} = \frac{\text{Total Points Earned}}{\text{Total Points Possible}}$$

It was determined that how a student is graded should be determined by grade level as well as content and subject area. It is important to provide teachers with autonomy and allow them to determine how to best grade a student in a particular course. All courses will be graded the same. For example, all 5th grade teachers will grade students on the same standards and have similar assessments, all biology courses will have approximately the same number of points, etcetera. The process for this will be for teachers to use PLC time to create a syllabus that outlines how a student will be graded and how they will earn their points. It should be broken down by quarter and an approximate number of points that a student can possibly earn should be listed. That syllabus will then be approved by administration prior to it being given to parents and students. Once approved, the syllabus will go home in the first week of the school year and shall be signed by both the student and parent indicating that they are clearly aware of how they will be graded in that particular course. The teacher will maintain these signed syllabi on file in case they need to be referred to over any discrepancies.