

Vision of the Outcome:

The proposed outcome is a fifth grade report card and curriculum alignment to the common core state standards and Michigan grade level content expectations for standards based grading. Standards based grades will allow staff at Ealy Elementary to make grades more meaningful for students and their families.

Statement of the Problem:

Ealy Elementary currently grades on a 1-4 scale two times per year for parent report cards only. These grades must fit into a unit of study and therefore often are not tied to specific standards. On a day to day basis, grades are meaningless and do very little to support student growth, inform instructional decisions, or report accurately to parents. Because of the current grading system students are not able to fully demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the standards.

Rationale of the Importance:

Grades are relied upon by students, parents, and educators. Without meaningful grades, students are unmotivated, parents are misinformed, and educators are making uneducated decisions. Our school needs to be sharing accurate information, making decisions based off of accurate information, and motivating our students to continually improve their understanding of standards.

Curriculum that is not aligned to the common core standards is ineffective for our students. Currently, time is being spent on lessons which are not tied to the CCSS and all of the standards are not being taught to students in their present grade level. Moving to a standards based report card will force staff to align their lessons with common core. Students will be taught and assessed on the standards they are being assessed on by the M-Step and are expected to know moving to the next grade level.

Background of the Problem:

Grading has been a reality in education for as long as students have been going to school. However, O'Connor writes, "Of all the things we do as teachers, few have the potential for creating more problems and misconceptions than grading." The assignments and assessments we chose to grade, how we chose to grade them, and how we report them has been causing problems in education for several years. On report cards, students are proficient or in many cases advanced in contrast, on state assessments and district level data assessments students are beginning proficiency or even unproficient.

Solutions to the Problem:

As O'Connor says, "It is inappropriate to focus on trying to eliminate grades; it is more productive to make grades better." To make grades more meaningful lessons have to be aligned to the standards.

The first step of this solution was to align math curriculum to the common core state standards so students could be graded based upon the standards. The attached unit calendars align daily lessons to the common core as well as the IXL reinforcement activity for the day. These calendars will allow teachers to really understand what standards they are teaching and what students are going to be required to do at the end of the lesson or unit based on those standards.

Along with aligning our current math curriculum, Bridges, with the common core lessons that were not aligned have been omitted or supplemented. Our teachers need to begin the year understanding that if the curriculum is not in the standards, it no longer needs to be done. This is a really tough concept for many teachers in the building because of their number of years teaching. IXL will help them with this because it is a program driven by the standards. The implementation of IXL will help teachers see the level of which students need to understand the math standards and also provides teachers with proficiency reports for each standard.

The final attachment is a sample of a fifth grade standards based report card. This was sent to our building administration as a format for the fifth grade report card. Moving to standards based grading will allow students, parents, and teachers the ability to use grades to effectively communicate with one another.

Design of the Solution:

Attached are the CCSS aligned unit planners, the IXL planner and membership, and a standards based report card sample.

Implementation of the Solution:

All staff will be invited to a 'Grading for Learning' professional development opportunity on August 17th, prior to our contracted start date. Because of this, teaching staff will be paid a \$50 stipend for their time and attendance. During this PD opportunity teaching staff will be informed of what standards based grading is, where to find the standards, how to set their classroom up for meaningful grading, and given the plan for the rest of the school year.

Once the school year begins, 4 Friday PD sessions will be set aside for reflection and replanning. Two sessions will be held two weeks prior to the semester end to check in with staff about how their grading is aligning to the standards. The last two sessions will

be held two weeks after the semester end to reflect and look for improvements for the next time.

One copy of *How to Grade for Learning* by Ken O'Connor will be purchased for the grade level. This will be available in the teacher resource room for anyone interested. In addition, the grade level's SBG reps will always be available for questions regarding the topic.

As we begin this process as a grade level we will likely run into obstacles along the way. As we come across areas of concern or places our plan needs amending, we will notify the group of changes and problem solve together. Sending out quick updates throughout the year via email and allowing for feedback will allow us to have a stronger understanding of standards based grading next year at this time.

Budget for the Program:

- PD Learning day for teachers prior to contracted start: \$50/teacher (18 T-staff)
- Yearlong IXL Subscription for all 5th grade students: \$1,238
- 4 PD Sessions throughout the year for reflection/replanning: \$0
- Grade level copy of *How to Grade for Learning*: \$35.96

Total Budget = \$2173.96

Evaluation of the Program:

At the end of each marking period a Google Form will be sent out to all staff members to complete. The responses to these evaluations will be used to target our PD moving forward and gather the necessary resources for our teachers to continue their own development with regards to standards based grading.

Resources:

Bellanca, J. (1992). *How to grade (if you must)*.

Burke, K. (1999). *The mindful school: How to assess authentic learning*.

Easton, L.B. (1977). *Walking our talk about standards*. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 88, 391-394.

Kain, D.L. (1996). *Looking beneath the surface: Teacher collaboration through the lens of grading practices*. *Teachers College*, 97, 569-587.

Midwood, D. O'Connor, K. (1993) *Assess for Success*. Toronto, Canada: Ontario Secondary Teachers Federation

O'Connor, K. (1995). *Guidelines for grading that support learning and student success*. *NASSP Bulletin*, 72, 24-28.

O'Connor, K. (2007) A repair kit for grading: 15 fixes for broken grades. Portland, OR: Educational Testing Service.

O'Connor, K. (2009). How to Grade for Learning. Library of Congress cataloging.

Stiggins, R.J. & Knight, T. (1997) But are they really learning? Portland, OR. Assessment Training Institute.

IXL Practice and Excel Website: <https://www.ixl.com/membership/>