

**Essential Question:**  
 What do grades represent at Hickman High School, and what do we want them to communicate?

**GOALS FOR GRADING PRACTICES CONVERSATIONS**

❖ Transform how we discuss grading and communicate student learning	Centralize discussions about grades in relation to how they communicate student learning as measured against predetermined objectives.  Ensure that our instructional decisions and grading practices support the learning process.  Use student work to diagnose specific learning needs and to inform instructional practice.
❖ Provide our faculty with tools, research, and professional development opportunities to help us make instructional decisions that are purposeful and intentional in terms of their impact on student learning and student grades.	The Learning and Instruction Team will utilize faculty dialogue sessions as an avenue to provide practical PD opportunities  It is the responsibility of all Hickman faculty to research best instructional and grading practices and present them for consideration throughout our process of forming and adopting a learning centered grading philosophy
❖ Adopt consistent, learning-centered practices within PLTs	PLTs will play an integral role in dialoguing about, reflecting over, and developing consistent instructional decisions and grading practices within PLTs that are purposeful and meet our overarching guideline of being learning-centered
❖ Adopt a school-wide, learning-centered grading philosophy that ensures consistency across ALL courses	By August 2017, Hickman will have adopted a grading philosophy that is research based, learning centered, and fully vetted by the instructional faculty and staff

**Proposal:**

- To develop universal grading philosophy that prioritizes student learning, reflects a focus on students’ mastery of content and skills, and accounts for the fluidity of the learning process for our diverse learners.

**PURPOSE: What are We Doing, and Why are We Doing It?**

Hickman High School is engaging in dialogue around the topics of grading and student learning to garner more consistency within and between professional learning teams and curricular departments. Better defining our philosophy and committing to consistent instructional practices are important steps in our progress as a professional learning community and in ensuring we provide students with consistent, equitable, and robust learning experiences. Ultimately, grades should—at all times—accurately communicate what a student knows and can do when measured against a standard or learning objective. In short, **our purpose is to develop and utilize practices that ensure grades are an accurate portrayal of student learning and mastery of objectives.**

**Problem(s):**

1. We currently have 15% of students failing one or more classes at Hickman (Fall 2015 RC data; down from 18.1% in Fall 2014).
2. We need to be more intentional in how we intervene with students at the classroom level in order to move students along the learning continuum for essential objectives.
3. Grading practices within PLTs are not as consistent as they should be. This results in varying academic experiences that are at times ‘unfairly’ beneficial to some students and at other times ‘detrimental’ to other students (depending on the practice).
  - a. The inconsistency makes it difficult for support block teachers to provide consistent academic support to students in the same course.
  - b. We want our grading practices to be research-based, learning-focused, consistent, and easily communicated to stakeholders.
4. Grades do not always accurately communicate students’ current progress toward mastery of the learning objectives to necessary stakeholders. This is in part due to:
  - a. The inclusion of non-academic indicators in the academic grade
  - b. A need to be more intentional about utilizing the assessment process to inform and intervene with students during a learning cycle
  - c. A need to review grading decisions that do not have a learning centered focus
    - i. Practices that do not honor most recent learning

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**PRODUCT: Where are We Going?**

By the start of the 2017 school year, Hickman faculty and staff will have drafted and adopted a school-wide <sup>1</sup>grading philosophy that promotes and prioritizes student learning and serves as a blueprint for instructional practice at Hickman High School.

**We will adopt grading and instructional practices that:****1. Prioritize student learning.**

- a. <sup>2</sup>Grading practices will complement our goal of ensuring students learn the essential content and skills outlined in course curricula.

**2. Focus on students' mastery of content and skills.**

- a. Our grading practices will be learning-centered and objective in nature.
- b. Factors that dilute grades or prevent them from accurately communicating a student's level of mastery of content and skills will not be included in the academic grade.

**3. Account for the fact that students learn differently and at different rates.**

- a. We will provide various opportunities and interventions to demonstrate what they know and can do.
- b. We will utilize instructional and intervention strategies, including effective feedback, that move students farther along the learning continuum toward mastery of objectives.
- c. We will foster independent thinkers and assessment capable learners by including students in every aspect of the learning process .
  - i. Utilize formative assessment processes that provide information about what students know and give insight into how to intervene through remediation or enrichment
    1. Provide students with feedback and include them in developing a plan for continued progress in their learning, including personal goal setting and metacognitive processing
    2. Utilize data cycles to differentiate instructional strategies and to track student progress throughout the learning cycle (DMR process)
- d. We will develop a foundational outline for how academic intervention may look during a learning cycle.
  - i. Develop policies and rationale for revision and re-dos within PLTs.
  - ii. At the PLT level, determine what work is and is not graded, and the rationale for those decisions, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> Grading philosophy will include beliefs, actions, instructional decisions, intervention, assessment, and mark reporting.

<sup>2</sup> This statement assumes that we will also have EMLOs outlined for each course

- iii. Develop and adopt intervention strategies to intervene using the tiered model of support

### **PRESENT: Where are We Now?**

- I. **IDT and PLTS**
  - a. Continuing grading discussions by in content alike PLTs to develop consistency within courses
    - i. Reflecting over current practices that are consistent and revising if necessary to ensure practicality. Also asked to revisit rationale for the course's grading practices to ensure they meet the criteria of being learning centered.
  - b. Reviewing grading practices matrix as a department to guide department-wide conversations toward consistency
- II. **Student Support**
  - a. Continuing to fine-tune our complex, multilayered student support model
  - b. Finding research to clearly delineate the difference between tiers our tiered intervention model
- III. **Learning and Instruction Team**
  - a. Using Faculty Dialogues as an avenue to highlight and present practical strategies for classroom implementation of learning-centered strategies

### **PROCESS: How Do We CLOSE THE GAP?**

- I. We need to develop a timeline that sets incremental goals for the work we hope to accomplish by the beginning of the 2017-18 school year.
  - a. With the timeline also comes an outline for the work that needs to be done at each step
- II. It is necessary to develop school-wide parameters for grading that support a learning-centered philosophy. Leadership Council will help facilitate this conversation, but the outgrowth will come from PLTs and through school-wide professional development.
  - a. Much of the work surrounding learning centered practices will need to be completed in professional learning teams. Teams must first have conversations among themselves to achieve consistency in what they teach, how they grade, and to develop a rationale that demonstrates how their grading practices (instruction, intervention, assessment) meet the learning centered criteria.
  - b. Once teams develop consistency, department wide conversations will be necessary to determine what practices should be consistent across the department.
  - c. Furthermore, this work is based on a professional learning continuum that requires us to reflect on the **instructional and intervention strategies** we use to centralize and improve upon student learning.
    - i. It also requires us to make instructional decisions regarding grading that match our goal of ensuring a final grade accurately communicates student learning against an objective.

Leadership Council:  
Commitments and Actions for Grading (DRAFT)

**Proposed Universals:**

**Because we believe instruction and grading are learning centered,**

- ❖ **we weight summatives more than formatives**
- ❖ **we ensure grades reflect students' mastery of learning objectives**
- ❖ **we involve students in the learning process**
- ❖ **we account for the fact that students learn differently and at different rates**
- ❖ **we provide consistent progress monitoring for intervention**

**Questions for PLTs to Consider**

**1. Goal: Prioritize student learning**

- a. How do the grading practices we've adopted complement our goal of ensuring students learn what we need them to learn?

**2. Goal: Focus on students' mastery of content and skills**

- a. How are our grading practices objective in nature and learning-centered?
- b. How are students' grades in our classes an undiluted and accurate reflection of what they know and can do?

**3. Goal: Account for the fact that students learn differently and at different rates.**

- a. Do we provide various opportunities and interventions so students can demonstrate what they know and can do?
- b. How do we know what instruction students need to move along the learning continuum toward mastery of objectives?
- c. How do we include students in the learning process (knowing learning targets, tracking where they are in the learning process, and knowing what they need to do to close the gap)
- d. What does academic intervention look like during a learning cycle?
  - i. Do we allow for revision and re-dos? Grade replacement?
  - ii. What is and is not graded, and what is our rationale for those decisions?