

Purpose and Nature of Grading Practices

Directions: Use the following prompts to guide discussion of your grading practices.

Purpose of grading:

1. How would you describe the purpose of assigning grades to your students?
2. To what degree does a student's grade reflect his or her understanding of essential learning standards?
3. Why is it important that your team develop common expectations for grading?
4. What does a student have to do or demonstrate to earn a C in your grade or course?

Design of grading systems:

5. What are the major components of your grading system?
6. How do mathematics assignments versus tests factor into a student's overall grade?
7. How do you compile evidence of student learning to calculate a final grade at the end of the marking period or semester?

Working with your team members, you can use this tool to guide a discussion about developing a deeper understanding of your grading practices. During the discussion, dig deep into routines that have been hard to change. Your grading routines will often remain unchanged and unchallenged for the better part of your career (Guskey, 2015). Ask team members to explain their practice using the lens of this overarching question: How do our team's grading practices contribute to improved student learning? Your response to "What is the *purpose* of grading?" is an essential first step in the process of understanding grading reform.

Yet, your grading routines should be an ever-evolving process, and you should judge them against whether your assigned grades reflect the only plausible purpose in a PLC culture: *grades provide students with feedback on their progress toward mastering the essential learning standards of the grade level or course*. There is no other purpose—not to teach responsibility, not to compare students against one another, and not to reveal performance on assignments designed for mathematics practice.

Thus, as part of your PLC culture-building work, you define the purpose of grading as *an essential component of the formative assessment and learning process* for students. It is a process that provides students with feedback on their progress toward proficiency with or mastery of the intended essential learning standards.