Tolland Public Schools

Mastery Learning Plan

2018-2019

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Equity over Equality

Equity over Equality

Educational professionals that practice Mastery Learning recognize that different students have different needs. This necessitates providing each learner with what is uniquely required for that person's success. While equality implies *sameness*, equity implies *fairness.* Equity is about making sure people get access to the same *opportunity*. Advantage, opportunity, and privilege associated with socioeconomic, racial, cultural, or historical factors can impact learning. It is the mission of all educators to do our best to provide each learner with opportunities to succeed that transcend disadvantage.


Stimulate and Support over Rank and Sort

Stimulate and Support over Rank and Sort

Educational professionals that practice Mastery Learning recognize that students do not come to school having experienced the same level of preparation and opportunity. As a result institutional **ranking and sorting** can inadvertently stigmatize, de-motivate, and perpetuate the trajectory the initial limitations on opportunity created. Educators try to help students overcome this, and institutions have to be structured so student success is less reliant on the individual heroics of some educators, and more on *systematic* and consistent *processes and practices* of the institution that provide the greatest opportunities for restorative justice, productive habits, and academic success.

Standardized assessments beyond those used as universal screens (assessments given to all learners for the purpose of providing specialized assistance), or those that can be used to impact instruction (progress monitoring), should be carefully evaluated for their usefulness in the process of educating children. The objective should always be to benefit the learner, and to do no harm. For instance, if poverty correlates significantly with lower state standardized test

performance, how many times is it necessary to report to a disadvantaged child and family that they are performing poorly before institutional processes are put in place to address the challenge? In other words, some standardized tests tell us what we already know – and in the process jeopardize the confidence and self-concept of the learner. Instead, assessment focused on *progress monitoring,* instead of one-shot standardized assessments, provide the most useful and actionable information for improving the performance of all students.
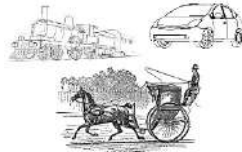
Transformative Practice

over

Tradition

Practice over Tradition

Educational professionals that practice Mastery Learning question current assessment traditions, and seek to transform teaching and assessment with a focus on practices that have the greatest chance of increasing student agency, ownership, reflection, and motivation towards their own learning and development. Mastery Learning is recognized as a crucial aspect of SRBI (Scientific Research Based Interventions), and as such practitioners take into consideration the developmental level and cognitive considerations of students when delivering instruction, remediation, and methods of encouraging habit change. It is the process of doing things because they work for students, not simply continuing "traditional" practices because it is what has always been done.

Principles of Mastery Learning

Over the past decade, the movement to adopt Mastery Learning approaches to teaching, learning, and graduating has gained momentum throughout the United States as more educators, parents, business leaders, and elected officials recognize that high academic expectations and strong educational preparation are essential to success in today's world. Schools use Mastery Learning to raise academic standards, ensure that more students meet high expectations, and graduate more students better prepared for adult life.

To help schools establish a philosophical and pedagogical foundation for their work, the Great Schools Partnership created the following "Ten Principles of Mastery-Based Learning," which describe the common features found in the most effective mastery-based systems:

1. All learning expectations are clearly and consistently communicated to students and families, including long-term expectations (such as graduation requirements and graduation standards), short-term expectations (such as the specific learning objectives for a course or other learning experience), and general expectations (such as the performance levels used in the school's grading and reporting system).
2. Student achievement is evaluated against common learning standards and performance expectations that are consistently applied to all students regardless of whether they are enrolled in traditional courses or pursuing alternative learning pathways.
3. All forms of assessment are standards-based and criterion-referenced, and success is defined by the achievement of expected standards, not relative measures of performance or student-to-student comparisons.
4. Formative assessments measure learning progress during the instructional process, and formative-assessment results are used to inform instructional adjustments, teaching practices, and academic support.
5. Summative assessments evaluate learning achievement, and summative assessments results record a student's level of mastery at a specific point in time.
6. Academic progress and achievement are monitored and reported separately from work habits, character traits, and behaviors such as attendance and class participation, which are also monitored and reported.
7. Academic grades communicate learning progress and achievement to students and families, and grades are used to facilitate and improve the learning process.
8. Students are given multiple opportunities to improve their work when they fail to meet expected standards.
9. Students can demonstrate learning progress and achievement in multiple ways through differentiated assessments, personalized-learning options, or alternative learning pathways.
10. Students are given opportunities to make important decisions about their learning, which includes contributing to the design of learning experiences and learning pathways.

Areas of Focus for the Tolland Public Schools

Of the Mastery Learning Principles the Tolland Public Schools have placed an emphasis on the following six areas of focus. These areas of emphasis for Tolland are reflected in the school's current programming in the 2018-2019 year.

1. All forms of assessment are standards-based and criterion-referenced, and success is defined by the achievement of expected standards, not relative measures of performance or student-to-student comparisons.
2. Formative assessments measure learning progress during the instructional process, and formative-assessment results are used to inform instructional adjustments, teaching practices, and academic support.
3. Summative assessments evaluate learning achievement, and summative assessments results record a student's level of mastery at a specific point in time.
4. Academic progress and achievement are monitored and reported separately from work habits, character traits, and behaviors such as attendance and class participation, which are also monitored ad reported.
5. Academic grades communicate learning progress and achievement to students and families, and grades are used to facilitate and improve the learning process.
6. Students are given multiple opportunities to improve their work when they fail to meet expected standards.

The Role of Assessment in Mastery Learning

Assessment applied in best practice is a tool for learning. Assessment methods should clearly indicate areas of relative strength and weakness in content and/or skills acquisition so that the information can be meaningfully utilized by students to improve their understanding, and form strategies for learning. In the Tolland Public Schools this means that assessment results are best reported disaggregated into categories or standards that provide detailed information a student can use to better understand areas of weakness and develop plans for learning.

In the Tolland Public Schools assessment is also a tool for developing student resilience, agency, and mastery of content. Mastery Learning in the Tolland Public Schools is designed with consideration given to the developmental level of the student (neurological, behavioral, and Cognitive) as the learner grows and progresses through the grades. At earlier levels (K-8) preliminary assessments, or those before the final summative assessment, must be re-taken by students if the scores fall below the school's minimum acceptable threshold. This practice helps students understand that the adult educators and the education system overall expect them to strive to achieve a comprehensive understanding. At the High School level this is achieved through a focus on strong formative assessment.

Assessment should also be a tool for the improvement of learning and as such it must provide an accurate representation of what a student knows and/or is able to do. Methods that disaggregate skills and content acquisition from behavioral considerations (such as compliance behaviors) help provide a more accurate representation of a student's acquisition of skills or content knowledge. This information can be more effectively utilized diagnostically by both the student and the educational institution to improve the student's understandings and performance. With behavioral considerations reported separately, a student can more effectively identify and remediate bad habits without the information being diluted thereby compromising the accuracy of the academic grades. This is important if the student is to use the academic grades diagnostically to trouble shoot and strategize about how to address academic misconceptions and misunderstandings.

Short Version:

Phase 1: 2015 – 2016
Administrator Training
Phase 2: 2016 – 2017
Staff, Community, BOE presentations
ML Taskforce policy committee
Phase 3: 2017 – 2018
Staff and school development of ML practices
Phase 4: 2018 – 2019
Implementation/ongoing refinement of ML practices in buildings

Details:

2015-2016 year

Administrators in the district worked with Amy Drowne, and reviewed the book *Challenging the Conventions of Grading and Reporting, On Your Mark* by Thomas Guskey.

Administrators reviewed current practices.

Administrators were presented options and developed an initial plan for moving forward in the district.

Administrators worked with Gerald Hairston on Culturally Responsive Education.

2016-2017 year

1. Vision Statement incorporates the Ten Principles for Mastery Learning (Summer 2016).

Vision: To develop a system of Mastery Based Learning and Assessment within each school where 1) all learning expectations are clearly and consistently communicated to students and families, 2) student achievement is evaluated against common learning standards and performance expectations that are consistently applied to all students, 3) All forms of assessments are based in standards and are criterion referenced (i.e. designed to determine whether each student has achieved a specific skill or understands specific content), 4) Utilize formative measures frequently to ascertain learning progress and to inform instructional adjustments, and determine academic supports 5) Summative assessments are utilized to record a student's level of mastery at a specific moment in time, 6) Academic progress and achievement are monitored and reported separately from work habits, character traits, and

behaviors such as attendance and class participation (reported separately), 7) Academic grades communicate learning progress and achievement to students and families and grades are used to facilitate and improve the learning process 8) Students are given multiple opportunities to improve their work when they fail to meet expected standards, 9) students can demonstrate learning progress and achievement in multiple ways through differentiated assessments, personalized-learning options, and alternative learning pathways, and 10) Students are given opportunities to become active participants and decision-makers regarding their own learning.

2. Academic Identity and Mastery Learning meetings/trainings occur for stakeholder groups in the district

Teachers:

Mastery Learning and Academic Identity (overview):

BGP:

February 8 – Academic Identity with Gerald Hairston
April 5 – Mastery Based Learning presentation

TIS:

January 10 - Academic Identity with Gerald Hairston
April 18 - Mastery Based Learning presentation

TMS

March 9 - Mastery Based Learning presentation
April 20 - Academic Identity with Gerald Hairston

THS:

December 19 - Academic Identity with Gerald Hairston
March 13 - Mastery Based Learning presentation

Formative Assessment workshops at THS

August 24th- THS- All Staff- Assessment for Learning w Jaime Reichenberg 1/2 day
August 25th- THS- All Staff- Assessment for Learning PD-
STEM Teachers 1/2 day;
Humanities Teachers 1/2 day,

1/2 day book study Embedded *Formative Assessment*

October 12, 2016- THS- Formative Assessment PD- prepare for Tuning Protocol (1/2 of the faculty)

November 4, 2016- THS- Formative Assessment PD- prepare for Tuning Protocol (other 1/2 of the faculty)
Teachers received 2 resources on FA The book mentioned above *Embedded Formative Assessment* by Dylan Willam & Siobhan Leahy AND *Assessment for Learning 100 Ideas for Secondary Teachers* by David Spendlove

Paraprofessionals

March 2017 Workshop / Training on Mastery Based Learning

April 2017 Workshop / Training on Academic Identity

Board of Education:

BOE: January – February Meeting 2016 – On Your Mark – Guskey

Other various presentations 2017 and 2018

Community:

Mastery Learning and Assessment workshops for the community, parents, and others

4-27-15 - Standardized Testing Workshop

11-18-15 - Standardized Testing and Assessment Workshop

10-19-16 - Assessment Workshop

3-1-17- Mastery Based Learning Workshop

4-24-2018 Mastery Learning presentation to community (parents/guardians)

5-8-2018 Mastery learning presentation to community (parents/guardians)

Also covered in various Superintendent Breakfast presentations/discussions.

3. Gather information from stakeholders about level of comfort / knowledge of ML practices (Spring 2017).
   a. Survey information from Teacher and staff sessions
   b. Community workshops

4. Meet with stakeholders (e.g. teachers, paraprofessionals, parents) to introduce ML and introduce the coming year's review of and work on assessment practices (Spring 2017)
   a. ML and Academic Identity presentations to staff
   b. BOE and community workshops
   c. ML Spring Policy Committee

5. Training/Workshop on Mastery Based Learning for Board of Education members.
   a. January – April BOE meeting
   b. BOE reading of the book *On Your Mark* – Thomas Guskey

6. A new Tolland Public Schools Mastery Learning document will be developed with input from stakeholders – Administrators, Teachers, Parents, Community members (Spring - Summer 2017) in an ML Taskforce committee. The taskforce committee will review and discuss "the big three"

   a. Tolland Public School Mastery Learning Policy (TPS-MPL) will be created

<u>2017-2018 year</u>

1. Professional Development activities in each school to develop developmentally appropriate practices based on the Tolland Public Schools Mastery Learning plan. Sessions will include PD and work sessions for teachers to develop practices specific to each school that are consistent with the TPS Mastery Learning plan.

   a. BGP
      i. August 28 / October 10, December 8 (2017) March 23rd (2018)
         1. Faculty / PLC time

   b. TIS
      i. August 28, December 8 (2017) March 23rd (2018)
         1. Faculty / PLC time

   c. TMS
      i. August 28, December 8 (2017) March 23rd (2018)
         1. Faculty / PLC time

   d. THS
      i. August 28, December 8 (2017) March 23rd (2018)
         1. Faculty / PLC time

2. Training on and implementation of technologies that facilitate best practice assessment methods (analyzing, progress monitoring, recording, reporting)

   a. Universal Screen(s) technology where available
   b. PowerSchool Assessment

3. Each school staff will develop Mastery Learning Practices in the 2017-2018 year for implementation in the 2018-2019 year documenting how the district's Mastery Learning practices will be executed in each building and grade level. This will be done using a combination of staff meetings, early release days, and professional development sessions with district and building administration as facilitators.

Birch Grove Primary and Tolland Intermediate School (K-5)

Overview

Tolland Intermediate School and Birch Grove Primary School practice a Mastery Learning and Assessment philosophy. Please see ***Additional Background Literature and Rationale*** of this document for some information on the background literature and rationale of Mastery Learning. The move to Mastery Learning and grading at Tolland Intermediate School and Birch Grove Primary School requires more of educators than traditional methods do. These practices will be most noticeable by parents and students in the 1) BGP/TIS Grading Scales, 2) Disaggregation of "averaged" grades into specific student skill categories (although an aggregate or "omnibus" grade will still be shown as well), 3) the separation of academic and behavioral performance reporting, and 4) the reassessment (retake) policy.

The Tolland Intermediate School and Birch Grove Primary School reporting system includes day to day academic performance that can be tracked in PowerSchool – and parents can sign up for regular progress updates. This electronic reporting of academic performance is more accurate, and more detailed than a paper report. For anyone who does not have access to the web, paper reports can be sent home at the end of each term. Parents will be reminded of the coming end of a Trimester through an on-line caller system, and will be encouraged to access PowerSchool at that time if they are not regularly doing so otherwise. Teachers are required to update the data in the PowerSchool Parent Portal within 10 school days of an assessment being taken, throughout the school year. Omnibus (or averaged) grades are available in PowerSchool; clicking on a grade will result in a displayed break down of the aggregate grade into all of the assessments that comprise it in the current quarter, and the categories into which they fit.

In addition, schools will provide trimester "HAWK" or "GROW" reports – or behavior reports on each student's behavioral performance in each class relative to the school's core values. Students complete a "self" report that is then reviewed by the teacher (with teacher comments added if s/he feels their opinion diverges from that of the student's), and sent home for parent review, signature, and return. The purpose of the behavior reports is to evolve beyond the practice of simply reporting behaviors on a "progress" report in which the student is a passive recipient of a rating. The literature on behavior indicates that when students, and human beings in general, are encouraged to reflect on their *own* behaviors and review themselves it results in more accountability and a greater propensity for change and growth on the part of the person reflecting. The reports are designed to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion between students and teachers, and students and guardians/parents, which were not possible with sporadic comments on progress reports.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Principal if you have any questions or comments.

Grading Scales

Grades for academic skills will be separated from any behavioral considerations. This is an important step in Mastery Learning assessment. The Academic Skills based grade a student receives has to reflect the student's learning and/or ability relative to a skill, competency, academic content, standard and/or indicator category. Reporting progress in this way provides more detailed information about the student's learning and ability level, and provides a method of avoiding misrepresentation of the student's actual skill acquisition because it excludes considerations that do not directly relate to a student's level of skill and knowledge in that area. The next section will contain definitions of the categories of student performance. The grading scale is as follows:

Score Range	Level of Understanding/Skill Acquisition
100 – 90	Advanced
89 – 80	Developed
79 – 70	Proficient
69 >=	Limited Evidence of Skill/Content Acquisition

Grades in Power School will be represented numerically. No letter grades will be reported with the numerical grade.

Academic Practice

Academic practice/homework is anything that is designed to *reinforce,* but will not be used formally to assess progress on academic content or skills*. If an assignment is designed to strengthen understanding (drill and practice math problems, reading to prep for the next day's class activity, etc.) and will **not** be used to assess progress on skills or content, it is considered *Academic Practice.*

Re-assessment for *non-summative assessments that count toward a student's end of term grade*

Re-assessments are mandatory on all ***non-summative assessments that count toward a student's end of term grade*** at Tolland Intermediate School and Birch Grove Primary School.

Please see the *Evaluation Example Matrix* in the ***Additional Background Literature and Rationale*** of this document for examples of which assessments are, and are not, subject to re-assessment.

Teachers will provide students with re-teaching opportunities for any student whose performance dictates the need for further skill acquisition. Re-teaching will occur at a time during the school day as designated by the teacher. Evidence of required re-teaching **may** be based upon but is not limited to the following:

- observational data,
- criterion referenced checklists,
- in-class assignments/performance
- formative practices to prepare students for assessments that count toward a student's grade
- Students who score 69 or below will be required to take the re-assessment. A student score of 69 or below on a planned reassessment will result in an LES or "Limited Evidence of Skill/Content acquisition" in the teacher gradebook. If a student does not participate in a planned reassessment, an NE or "No Evidence" designation should be entered into Power Teacher / PowerSchool for the assessment. If a student performs below 70 on the re-assessment, that student will have the reassessment highest grade earned entered into Power Teacher / PowerSchool for that assessment. Students *must* complete a remediation activity *before* re-assessing (this can be a packet, activity, or assignment provided by the teacher). If a student is being re-assessed frequently the team teachers will discuss the student's performance and formulate a plan or complete a Pre- SAT referral as appropriate.

Assessing Students' Behavior (Academic Behaviors / Social Behaviors)

Productive academic and social behaviors lend themselves to successful academic achievement. Given this, schools will also assess and report how students perform behaviorally. The student behavioral assessment is called the "HAWK Report" or "Grow Report" and reports the student's progress on and adherence to the core values of the school. These will be communicated to parents/guardians three times a year. Students will be asked to complete this report card with each teacher and class they have; the teacher will then review the reports for accuracy checking off and making comments only when they disagree, want to provide information from their data, or need to clarify something the student has reported. These reports will be sent home for parents. These reports go beyond the typical "comments" on a progress report because they require students to reflect on their own behaviors, and progress or lack thereof in that area. Literature on behavior and habit formation suggestions that this reflection process is integral to changing behavior. In addition, the reports are reviewed by the teachers, and sent home to the parents for review and reflection with the students. This process has significant

behavioral advantages over a comment on a progress report or report card - and provides many opportunities for cognitive reflection and improvement for students.

Tolland Middle School

TMS Grading Scales grades for academic skills will be separated from behavioral considerations. This is an important step in Mastery Learning. The Academic Skills based grade that a student receives has to reflect the student's learning and/or ability relative to a skill, competency, academic content, standard and/or indicator category. Doing so provides more detailed information about the student's learning and ability level, and provides a method of mitigating misrepresentation of the student's actual skill acquisition by excluding considerations that do not relate directly to a student's level of skill and knowledge in that area (such as behavior / compliance).

Score Range	Level of Understanding/Skill Acquisition
100 – 90	Advanced
89 – 80	Developed
79 – 70	Proficient
69 >=	Limited Evidence of Skill/Content Acquisition

Grades in Power School will be represented numerically. No letter grades will be reported with the numerical grade.

SOAR Report

A "SOAR Report" is a student behavioral assessment used for reporting student behavioral performance in each class relative to the school's core values of Safety, Ownership, Active Learning, and Respect. The purpose of the SOAR report is to evolve beyond the practice of simply reporting behaviors on a "progress" report in which the student is a passive recipient of a rating. Students complete a "self" report to reflect on their behavior with each teacher and class. Each teacher will then review the reports for accuracy and make recommendations if necessary. These will be scored in PowerSchool at the close of each marking period for all classes. The results will be reflected in PowerSchool as follows: 4 (exemplary), 3 (proficient), 2 (developing), or a 1 (below standard).

TMS Re-assessment/retake procedure for *non-summative assessments that count toward a student's end of term grade*

In a class at Tolland Middle School, if the majority of the class performed poorly on an assessment (more than 50%) the assessment is not to be considered in any student's grade. Instead, re-teaching and re-assessment should occur.

Individual students who perform **below a 70** on any non-summative assessment will be required to participate in a remediation session and be reassessed within a two week period. A remediation session can be, but not limited to a packet, activity, and/or assignment provided by the teacher, and completed by the student prior to the re-assessment. The score recorded in PowerSchool will be the highest grade earned, although a student's original score can be noted in the comments. If a student refuses to take the re-assessment, the original score will be entered into Power School. If a student performs below a 70 on the re-assessment, that student will have the highest grade earned entered into Power School. Students have one opportunity to re-assess and will be assigned a date to take the re-assessment up to two weeks after the original assessment provided they participate in a remediation session determined by the teacher. If a student is being re-assessed frequently the team teachers will discuss the student's performance and formulate a plan, EIP (Educational Intervention/Improvement Plan), or referral to Tier II or III SRBI/RtI services as appropriate.

Students who score a **70 or above** on a non-summative assessment have the **option** of re-assessing. The student will be responsible for seeking out the teacher to request a re-assessment. Once the student has expressed an interest to re-assess and spoken with the teacher, the teacher will discuss with the student what type of remediation needs to occur, and when and how that will take place. The teacher will assign a date to take the re-assessment up to two weeks after the original assessment provided the student participate in a remediation session determined by the teacher. The score recorded in PowerSchool will be the highest grade earned, although a student's original score can be noted in the comments.

Reassessments will occur on a date at the teacher's discretion, after school or during TMS extended block.

Please see the Evaluation Example Matrix in the ***Additional Background Literature and Rationale*** of this document for examples of which assessments are, and are not, subject to re-assessment at Tolland Middle School.

Academic Practice

Academic Practice replaces the term "homework." Anything that is designed to reinforce, but will not be used to assess progress on academic content or skills, is Academic Practice. In other words, if an assignment provides information or data about how a student is progressing on one of the learning indicators/categories it is considered an assessment and can be part of the Academic grade. If an assignment is designed to reinforce an understanding (drill and practice math problems, task completion, preparation for class, reading to prep for the next day's class activity, etc.) and will not be used to assess progress on skills or content, that is considered Academic Practice and a student's performance in this area would be evaluated through a behavioral report (see the SOAR Report section below). Students who refuse to do their work (Assessment or Academic Practice), perform poorly, or whom complete work in a way that is not conducive to learning will be assigned to one of the following academic supports: TMS Academic Assistance Program, Academic Lab, time after school with teacher, or extended block (X-Block). The teacher will communicate to the parents through email or a phone call to share concerns and steps taken to assist the student in meeting academic expectations.

Student Academic Assistance Opportunities

TMS After School Academy

This program is staffed by teachers or paraprofessionals after school from 2:30-4:10, Monday through Thursday. Teachers may refer a student to the academy for additional support. The teacher will contact a parent to let them know which day their child has been assigned to the academy. Students either take the late bus home, or be picked up at 4:10 PM.

Academic Lab

The lab is staffed by a paraprofessional at various times during the school day. Teachers have the option to utilize this space for students to reassess during the school day if and when it is conducive to student learning.

Extended Block-(XBlock)

XBlock occurs every Wednesday from 1:30-2:30 during the school day with all teachers and students. The block is utilized for re-teaching, re-assessing, and enrichment.

Students who demonstrate a continued need for these services will be considered for Tier II and III supports.

SOAR REPORT Student Self - Reflection
Name: _____ Class: _____ Teacher: _____

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	4-Exemplary 3-Proficient 2-Developing 1-Below Standard	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
SAFETY					**ACTIVE LEARNING**				
Follows all TMS/Class rules, procedures, and safety expectations					Is alert and engaged during class (making eye contact and paying attention to the speaker, materials are out and ready, following directions)				
OWNERSHIP					Asks and responds to questions; participates in class discussions				
Shows self-control in class; focus is on academic conversations					Works well with others				
Comes to class prepared with assigned work and all materials needed for class					Actively participates when working in groups				
Materials/binders/ notebooks appropriately organized					Stays focused on tasks				
Comes to class on time					**RESPECT**				
Turns in work on time					Shows self-respect and takes pride in doing work completely and neatly				
Completes missed/make-up work					Uses appropriate non-verbal communication/body language towards others				
					Uses appropriate verbal communication/words toward others				

Q 1 COMMENTS:	Q 3 COMMENTS:
Q 2 COMMENTS:	Q 4 COMMENTS:

Evaluation Example Matrix

Assessment Category	Assessment Type	Main Record location	Description	Examples	Subject to Re-assessment
Academic Practice	Drill and Practice, work completion	Power School (as non-graded), teacher notebooks	Assignments designed to reinforce classroom learning. Assignments checked for completion but not necessarily for skill acquisition.	Reading and answering general questions (questions designed mainly to ascertain if the student *completed* the task, not for any academic skill), math drill and practice, pre-reading for upcoming content or lesson, Journal writing (unless *assessed* for specific skills), task completion, preparation for class.	No
Class Assessments	Progress Monitoring graded assessments*	Power School (counts towards omnibus grade),	*Classroom* assessments. Assessments that can be different for each class and suited/adjusted to the instructional needs of individual students or *class* populations. These are implemented to generate information about student skill acquisition during the process of learning material and should be utilized for the purpose of providing feedback/data for both student and teacher to modify teaching and learning activities.	Quiz, Test, short writing activity, daily or weekly project, check-for-understanding, assignments (take home or otherwise) that will be reviewed by the teacher for skill/content acquisition and for which _**feedback is provided**_ to help students better understand content, and better apply skills, and _individual student progress_ is reviewed for the purpose of assessing and adjusting instruction and/or learning strategies.	Yes
Common / Unit / Final Assessments	Summative	Power School (omnibus grade), Mastery Manager, NWEA	*Common Summative Assessments.* Assessments that are designed to determine an individual student and student group's acquisition of skills and content knowledge. It is used primarily to see whether instruction, strategies, and formative assessments were accurate and successful in measuring and facilitating student acquisition of skills and knowledge. These are uniform assessments given to multiple classrooms, and/or an entire grade or school population of learners.	SBAC, NWEA, Unit Assessments, Benchmark Tests, Common Assessments	No

- Progress monitoring assessments typically occur between Summative assessments. Our re-assessment policy as well as our use of classroom assessments makes our *class assessments* a sort of quasi-formative assessment but differ from formatives in that these assessments count toward a student's grade.

Tolland High School

Throughout the 2017-2018 school year, Tolland High School (THS) faculty spent professional development time working on Mastery Learning. As part of the district implementation of Mastery Learning the school will be employing innovative assessment and reporting practices starting this (2018-2019) school year. While each school in the Tolland Public School system practices Mastery Learning, the approach is tailored to the developmental level of the students and is designed to best prepare them in content and skill acquisition for the next step. At the high school, this next step is college and career readiness.

The sixth of the ten principles of Mastery Learning adopted in the district focuses on delineating compliance behaviors separately from acquisition of content, knowledge, and skills. The principle reads as follows:

> "Academic progress and achievement are monitored and reported separately from work habits, character traits, and behaviors such as attendance and class participation, which are also monitored and reported" (The Great Schools Partnership)

An example that is counter to the principle noted above is when a teacher assigns homework on the first day of the semester which requires a parent/guardian to sign a syllabus. The homework assignment does not measure a student's acquisition of curricular knowledge, skills, or content. Rather, it simply indicates compliance to a teacher's direction. The assigning of an effort grade as part of a collaborative group project is also not a true reflection of the student's attainment of knowledge, skills, or content. While compliance is an important habit to learn and will still be addressed as indicated below, practices of providing points or credit that increase a grade average due to compliance behaviors result in inaccurate academic grades that dilute an understanding of a student's knowledge and skill acquisition. It is important for students to have accurate academic indicators with which they can self-assess their own progress on skills and knowledge and create goals to improve their ability and understandings.

The principle also states compliance behaviors should be monitored and reported to provide students information and hold them accountable for demonstrating beneficial actions such as engaging in nightly practice as well as other habits that prepare them to be college and career ready. Through a consensus building process the faculty developed a Behavioral Expectations Matrix which contains three indicators associated with preparedness, classroom etiquette, and engagement. Much like the other school-wide analytic rubrics which have been in place since 2014, the faculty created definitions for the various levels of performance using a 4-point scale. During the 2018-2019 school year, teachers will utilize our Behavioral Expectation Matrix at least twice per quarter to monitor progress on these beneficial student behavioral expectations. At the end of each quarter and semester, the average for each of the indicators will be reported for each class on the report card. The scores will also appear as standards-based grades in PowerSchool. In addition, the averages across all courses will appear on a student's transcript for not only the Behavioral Expectations Matrix, but for all school-wide analytic rubrics (Reading, Writing, Speaking, Problem Solving & Critical Thinking, Application & Use of Technology, and Personal Growth).   The Behavioral Expectations Matrix is included for your review at the end of this document.

The THS faculty also focused on two other Mastery Learning district principles:

> "Formative assessments measure learning progress during the instructional process, and formative assessment results are used to inform instructional adjustments, teaching practices, and academic support.' (Great Schools Partnership)

> "Summative assessments evaluate learning achievement, and summative assessment results record a student's level of mastery at a specific point in time." (Great Schools Partnership)

Numerous professional development sessions were dedicated to helping teachers develop a deeper understanding of formative and summative assessments. It is important to note the distinction between the two given this language will be used more frequently moving forward with both students and parents. Formative assessment seeks to determine how students are progressing academically. Considered an "assessment for learning," formative assessment is intended to provide both the student and the teacher with information about the student's academic progress. Warm-ups, exit cards, academic practice, think-pair-share activities, discussion diamonds, etc. are some possible examples of formative assessment. According to an *Education Week* article (Heitin, 2018), researchers and instructional experts almost inevitably offer a resounding, "No," when asked whether assignments that are meant to inform instruction should receive a grade. This is because assignments that inform instruction are tools through which students and teachers can gauge their understandings and progress in the process of learning, not as an end in and of themselves. Formative assessments are used to strengthen skills and understandings so that students have a better opportunity for higher levels of skill and content acquisition and higher performance on summative assessments. Thus, formative assessments at THS will be assessed and used as learning tools by the teacher and the student, but they will not be reflected in a student's final grade. Instead, students will be provided opportunities to understand what they know and are able to do, and will be encouraged to form goals and strategies to exercise habits of self-understanding, diagnosis, and improvement.

A summative assessment is an "assessment of learning." The purpose of a summative assessment is to measure the student's understanding on the material covered after teaching, formative assessment, feedback, and re-teaching have occurred. Possible examples include unit tests, benchmarks, essays, projects, presentations, and lab reports. Summative assessments measure a student's mastery of a topic and count as part of a student's final grade. Although the school and district will be employing quality formative assessment practices, this will not translate into fewer assessment opportunities that apply toward a student's final academic grade. Instead, the formative practices are designed to improve a student's understanding, skill acquisition, self-awareness, reliance, and resilience in improving their understanding and performance in preparation for the summative assessments.

THS faculty has chosen to utilize a strong, formative assessment model with opportunities to reteach and strengthen learning. The THS Behavioral Expectations Matrix is below:

THS BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS MATRIX

	4	3	2	1
Preparedness	**Consistently** brings needed materials to class and is **always** ready to learn.	**Usually** brings materials to class and is **usually** ready to learn.	**Sometimes** brings materials to class and is **sometimes** ready to learn.	**Rarely** brings materials to class and is **unprepared** to learn.
Classroom Etiquette	**Always** shows strong self-control and respect for others, their property, and school equipment by following classroom rules and/or safety guidelines.	**Consistently** shows strong self-control and respect for others, their property, and school equipment by following classroom rules and/or safety guidelines.	**Sometimes requires reminders** to show self-control and respect for others, their property, and school equipment and only sometimes follows classroom rules and/or safety guidelines.	**Requires teacher/administrative intervention** to respond to disrespect for others, their property, and school equipment and rarely follows classroom rules and/or safety guidelines.
Engagement	Shows **excellent effort** by completing and improving all assignments. **Consistently** participates appropriately in course activities (i.e. listening, contributing, supporting, collaborating).	Shows **good effort** by completing and improving most assignments. **Usually** participates appropriately in course activities (i.e. listening, contributing, supporting, collaborating).	Shows **inconsistent effort** by completing and improving some assignments. **Sometimes** participates appropriately in course activities (i.e. listening, contributing, supporting, collaborating).	Shows **unsatisfactory effort** by rarely participating appropriately in class activities and completing minimal work. May refuse to participate in course activities.

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Resources

<u>Readings</u>

- Guskey, Thomas: *On Your Mark - Challenging the Conventions of Grading and Reporting*
- Dueck, Myron: *Grading Smarter, Not Harder - Assessment Strategies that Motivate Kids and Help Them Learn*
- Wormelli, Richard: *Fair Isn't Always Equal - Assessing and Grading in the Differentiated Classroom*

<u>Links</u>

- [Center for Collaborative Education](#)
- [The Great Schools Partnership](#)
- [State of Connecticut Resources - Mastery Learning](#)
- [League of Innovative Schools](#)

<u>Videos</u>

- [Rick Wormelli – Re-takes and Do-Overs](#)
- [Sal Khan – Let's teach for mastery](#)
- [Rick Wormeli – Defining Mastery](#)

Additional Background Literature and Rationale

One of the challenges of our educational time is grade inflation. A recent report from the College Board investigated grade inflation, the process in which higher grades are assigned (over time) for the same level of achievement. The study in the report compared SAT scores and cumulative grade point averages (GPAs) over 11 years of diploma receiving cohorts. The study involved 1.2 million students. The findings were that the average GPA for the class of 1996 was 2.64; in 2006 the average GPA was 2.90. However, during that period, standardized scores on the SAT remained relatively unchanged. (Godfred, Kelly, *Investigating Grade Inflation and Grade Non-Equivalence – available at* http://professionals.collegeboard.com/data-reports-research/cb/gradeinflation_nonequivalence*.)*

A similar report by the makers of the ACT indicated that between 1991 and 2003, the mathematics grades of students taking the ACT exam rose from a grade point average of 2.80 to 3.04, whereas their average scores on the math portion of the ACT rose only slightly, from 20.04 to 20.55 on a 36 point scale. Similarly, average English grades rose from a grade point average of 3.04 to 3.29, whereas ACT English scores nudged up from 20.22 to 20.46 (Woodruff & Ziomek, 2004).

In another report nearly twice as many students reported earning an A or A- average in 2006, than in 1992 (32.8 percent versus 18.3 percent) (Twenge & Campell, 2013). In yet further research two federal reports found that the performance of U.S. school students on the reading portion of the NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Process) had declined between 1992 and 2005, even though students reported getting higher grades (GPAs rose from 2.68 in 1990, to 2.98 in 2005).

Some Big Questions

Among the big questions when thinking about Mastery grading are:

1) Are grades supposed to act as *incentives (to perform), Feedback (to use for improving performance), or evaluation (to assess mastery)?*

2) Should we have separate marks for *Progress (improvement from the last performance), Process (effort and timeliness,* and/or *Product* (achievement of standards)?

Product criteria are favored by educators who believe that the primary purpose of grading is to communicate summative evaluations of students' achievement and performance (O'Connor, 2002) focusing on what students know and are able to do at a point in time. Product criteria are usually final examination scores, final reports, projects, or exhibits, etc.

Process criteria are emphasized by educators who believe that product criteria do not provide a complete picture of student learning. In this perspective, grades reflect not only the final results, but also how the students got there. Process criteria are responsibility, effort, work habits, etc.

Progress Criteria are used by educators who believe that the most important aspect of grading is how much students gain from their learning experiences. Progress criteria are learning gains, improvements in scores on a standard or concept, educational growth evaluations, and value-added evaluations. The educators using this approach look at how much improvement students have made over a particular period of time, rather than where they are at a given moment (Educational Leadership, *Effective Grading Practices*, November 2011, Vol.69 No.3).

Although there is research that suggests grades and other reporting methods affect student motivation and the effort they put forth (Cameron & Pierce, 1996), and studies show that most students view **high grades** as positive recognition of their success (Haladyna, 1999) <u>there is no research that supports the idea that low grades prompt students to try harder</u>. More often, low grades prompt students to withdraw from learning (Selby & Murphy, 1992).

<u>Re-assessments (Redos and Retakes)</u>

As Rick Wormelli points out in *Redos and Retakes Done Right* (2011):

> "Many teachers reason that they are building moral fiber and preparing students for the working world by denying them the opportunity to redo assignments and assessments…These are the same teachers who set a deadline for submitting work and then give students who do not meet the deadline a zero, thinking that the devastating score will teach them responsibility. In reality, these practices have the opposite effect: They retard student achievement and maturation. As hope wanes, resentment builds…students disengage from the school's mission and the adults who care for them."

Wormelli uses the Olympic runner as an example, stating "does he get a do-over of the race? No, and that's proper at this level of competition. Remember, he's not in the *learning-to-run* stage of development, he's in the *proficient-runner* stage." Wormelli points out that the runner became competent at racing because he has run a dozen times, or even hundreds of times prior to the race, and that each time he ran his time was not aggregated into a compilation of all his digressions (bad times) woven together with his successful ones, instead, often his best time is reported. For example, if his early time was 68.74 two years ago, and his best new time is 51.03, averaging the two numbers would not give an accurate indication of the level that the runner is performing.

To Wormelli, and other researchers, practice, retakes, and redos are how humans learn. They do not learn from, for instance, receiving a 55 on an assessment, and then never revisiting or reinforcing the content. Humans learn best when we can review our failures, and try again, until we obtain some level of mastery of the competency, content, and/or idea.

The Omnibus Grade

For years, averages or means have been used to report grades. This has also been referred to as an "Omnibus" grade (Marazano, 2011, Heflebower, 2011). And there has been a lot of research criticizing the current way we do grading, which has its origins at Harvard University in 1880 (Crooks, 1933, DeZouche, 1945, Kirschenbaum, Simon, & Napier, 1971; Marshall, 1968). This is true of final grades, and individual assessments. Consider this quote from Marazano:

> "Two students, both of whom have attained a score of 70. The first student might have acquired all 35 of the 35 points on patterns but only 35 of 65 points on data analysis. The student has demonstrated a robust understanding of patterns but only a partial understanding of data analysis. The second student might have received only 5 of the 35 points on patterns, but all 65 points on data analysis. This student has demonstrated the opposite pattern. The convention of designing tests that involve more than one topic and then scoring these tests…makes it impossible to gauge individual students' knowledge."

Averaging grades falsifies grade reports (Marazano, 2000; O'Conner, 2009, 2010; Reeves, 2010; Wormelli, 2006). A student who receives an F on the first test but then learns the material and receives and A on a new assessment would, if averaged, get an average of the two (say a C). This does not represent an accurate report of the student's proficiency.

Marazano (2011) gives an example of the limitations of "omnibus" grading by using three students. Student 1 receives a "B" on his report card for math (a traditional omnibus grade). Student 2 receives a report card that indicates he received a "B" in number sense, a "C" in calculation, and an "A" in measurement (a hybrid). Student 3 received different grades for Number Sense variables of *Identifies place value to 1000s, Readings and writes common fractions, Reading whole numbers through four digits, Writes whole numbers through four digits, and Orders and compares whole numbers through four digits*. In the last two examples, more meaningful information is provided.

Similarly, mixing in academic behaviors (receiving zeros for tardiness on assignments or for non-compliance behaviors not related to content mastery) can result in a lower "omnibus" average than the student's actual skills would indicate. Another example of this would be that an "organized notebook" is not, say, a geometry standard. It is a helpful learning tool, but is not an indicator of what a student has learned (O'Conner, Ken. & Wormelli, Rick., 2011).

The Problem with Zeros

Zeros provide a mathematical inaccuracy when used in grading practices. This is true because it does not represent equal skewing. "Recording a zero on a 100-point scale for a student's lack of work on an assessment not only falsifies the report of what he or she knows, but also immediately generates despair. Only a mammoth pile of perfect 100s can overcome the deficit

and result in a passing D grade. So why bother? (O'Connor & Wormelli, 2011)." When averaging grades a single assignment that is a zero can disproportionately skew the data: 100+100+100+0 equals a 75, whereas if the lowest possible grade of an F followed a "fair" and mathematically even scale (say of 50) the average yields an 87.5, or closer to the truth of overall competency, especially if these assessments are all reporting on a specific skill set or indicator. At TMS students who do not complete work will receive an "NE" to indicate that we have no evidence of whether they have attained that skill or not. The re-assessment policy is meant to try to help avoid this situation.

<u>Group Work</u>

"Suppose students work collaboratively in a history class to analyze rhetoric, prepare for debates, or prepare a multi-media presentation that analyzes economic models. These are all methods for teaching students the history curriculum, but they are not the history curriculum itself. In addition, when students present their final report with everyone's names displayed on the opening slide, we're not sure where one student's influence ends and another's begins (O'Connor & Marazano, 2011)."

To be true to Mastery grading, and knowing a student's actual level of skill acquisition, students must be assessed outside the group work to understand what each student is learning from the experience. Group work/projects are really only a means to an end, they are not the actual curriculum.

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