

Frequently asked questions (FAQ's) about proficiency:

What are learning targets?

Learning targets are the roadmap of the skills your child needs and will learn in each content area. Learning targets are derived from educational standards set forth by the state of Oregon. Our teachers have unwrapped these standards into “student friendly” learning targets which will be made known at the beginning of every course at the middle school level. Learning targets are also the foundation in the creation of valid and reliable assessments.

What does it mean to show proficiency and what is its purpose?

Showing proficiency means that students will have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge of the content standards without penalty of a decline in their grades (i.e. students will be given multiple opportunities to retake an assessment per 9 week grading period). We want ALL students to reach proficiency on all of the learning targets. If they can't, we will provide them with the necessary support in the form of academic interventions.

The purpose of Proficiency is to help ensure that all middle school students benefit from high expectations and are given the necessary time and support to meet those expectations. Proficiency will change the way in which grades are derived and it will also change the way in which students are assessed.

Where did this idea come from?

Proficiency is not a new idea. Examples of proficiency assessment are everywhere in our society. Doctors, lawyers, teachers, soldiers, secretaries, and even drivers all must pass assessments that judge whether they have met a determined level of skill or not. If they have not, they are expected to go back, re-study, and re-practice their material until they are ready to re-attempt the proficiency assessment. We will take this same approach to assessing the most important skills for each student's success.

Why are we getting rid of extra credit?

We are doing away with extra credit because extra credit inflates students' grades. Grades should always be indicative of student knowledge on the content standards. Unfortunately, extra credit points can be given out to students for random things such as bringing in a box of kleenex, going to a fundraiser for school, or turning work in early. These types of activities do not reflect student knowledge and should not be included within student grades. We also use grades as indicators for students that may need extension or interventions. If grades aren't reliable, then students may be placed incorrectly or miss the extra support needed to help them achieve success

What is a summative assessment?

Summative assessments are tests that teachers generally use to measure student progress on learning targets. Summative assessments are scored consistently and accurately sometimes with the support of a common scoring guide and the grades are entered into the grade book. From this point on, 80% of your student's grade in his/her classes will be based on their performance on these summative assessments. If your student does not pass a summative assessment, then they will be given more opportunities to retake the assessment per 9 week grading period. Summative assessments may include end of unit tests, speeches, projects and/or presentations.

What is a formative assessment?

Formative assessments are informal “checks for understanding” that teachers do on a daily,

sometimes weekly basis, to verify student progress on the learning targets. Formative assessments are extremely important in our move toward proficiency because they provide immediate feedback to the student and teacher before the student takes a summative assessment for a grade.

What are the Common Core Standards?

The Common Core Standards are federal standards that Oregon has adopted. The Common Core Standards have been adopted by 48-50 states in the subjects of Math, Reading, Writing, and Social Studies. Students will be tested on these new standards in the Spring of the 2015 school year. The standards are performance based, and students will have to explain their answers to problems. This is a move in the right direction.

If we base the majority of the grade on the test, will students not learn about the importance of work habits?

Absolutely not! We believe that work habits are vital to individual success both now and in the future and we will continually teach and emulate good work habits. We do feel however that student grades should be a reflection of what students know. Student characteristics that fall within the "Citizenship" (i.e. behavior, work habits) category will be reported separately. Students that fail to put forth the necessary effort will also be given more mandated time in the form of lunch study hall and academic support. Frequent failure to turn in work can also result in behavior consequences.

What if my student fails a test?

If your student scores below a 70% on an assessment, then he/she MUST retake the assessment (*Please note that in 2012-2013 student retakes are **optional**). Before students are allowed the opportunity to retake an assessment they must satisfactorily complete a retake plan approved by the teacher. Students will be given multiple opportunities per 9 week grading period to retake an assessment and the student's highest score will be reported in the grade book.

What are the benefits of this change?

This change supports our district mantra of "High School Graduation Starts Today!" Learning targets provide consistency, clarity, and truth about individual student progress. The learning targets for each subject area are the same across the middle schools. So, a student in a Pre-Algebra class in one school is held to the same standard as an Pre-Algebra student in another school. Students, parents, teachers, and community members know what is expected from students to demonstrate proficiency of each learning target in each subject area. Classroom assignments are linked to learning targets, which means students know what it is they need to learn. This removes the guessing game for students. The emphasis is on learning skills and understanding concepts. Learning Targets and Proficiency gives students, parents, and teachers more information to provide focused interventions/extensions for students to ensure academic success for each student.

