



DMPS

ELEMENTARY

GRADING

PRACTICES

TEACHER HANDBOOK



THE BEST YOU
COME HERE. **BECOME** [✓] **HERE.**

dmschools.org

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Summary

A Grading and Reporting Task Force was organized in August 2012 for the purpose of developing district-wide guidelines and practices that would ensure effective and consistent implementation of both the grading and the reporting of students' learning. The team consisted of teachers, administrators, and support personnel from across the district's secondary schools. The initial question posed by the task force was *How confident are we that the grades assigned to our students are consistent, accurate, meaningful, and supportive of learning?* (O'Connor, 2011). The task force worked collaboratively to develop Guiding Practices [now Grading Practices] which support teachers and administrators in decision making as the district moves with focused intentionality towards truly effective grading practices.

Our Why

We believe it is every child's civil right to be held to high expectations, regardless of zip code.

Core Belief

Des Moines Public Schools commit to all stakeholders to provide fair, accurate, specific, and timely information regarding student progress toward Grade Level Standards as well as feedback for next steps and growth areas. Progress reports communicate what students know and can do.

Fair	The same work, by the same student, should receive the same score, even if the teacher is different.
Accurate	Scores are based solely on achievement, which means other factors, like behavior and attendance, are not used to calculate a grade.
Specific	Student expectations should clearly communicate what students should know and be able to do at each grade level (grade level standards).
Timely	Feedback to students is timely which allows immediate support and guidance so that students can improve their performance toward grade level expectations.



Grading Practices

1. A consistent 4-point grading scale is used.
2. Academic achievement is reported separately from behaviors.
3. Scores are based on a body of evidence.
4. Achievement is organized and reported by learning topic.
5. Students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate proficiency.
6. Accommodations and modifications are provided for exceptional learners.

***Grading Practice 1:
A consistent 4-point grading scale is used.***

This is the general Elementary scale for DMPS:

Score	Academic Descriptor
4	Independently EXCEEDING grade level expectations
3	Independently MEETING grade level expectations
2	DEVELOPING toward grade level expectations
1	NOT YET MEETING grade level expectations
0	NO EVIDENCE yet of grade level expectations
X	Content not addressed

In DMPS, we use the **general scale** above to ensure students, teachers, and parents consistently understand what the different levels mean in terms of meeting grade level learning. We use **topic scales** so that students and teachers know what students should know and be able to do to meet grade level expectations. The scale is used to communicate student learning. What follows is an example of a topic scale.


This is a sample Grade 2 Math topic scale for DMPS:

Adding, Subtracting, and Working with Data	
2.OA.A.1, 2.OA.B.2, 2.MD.D.10, 2.MD.D.IA.2	
<i>This topic scale is aligned to Unit 1 from Illustrative Mathematics</i>	
4	In addition to score 3.0 performance, the student demonstrates in-depth inferences and applications that go beyond the goal.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use addition and subtraction within 100 to solve one- and two-step word problems involving situations of adding to, taking from, putting together, taking apart, and comparing, with unknowns in all positions, e.g., by using drawings and equations with a symbol for the unknown number to represent the problem. 2.OA.A.1 ✓ Fluently add and subtract within 20 using mental strategies. By the end of Grade 2, know from memory all sums of two one-digit numbers. 2.OA.B.2 ✓ Draw a picture graph and a bar graph (with single-unit scale) to represent a data set with up to four categories. Solve simple put-together, take-apart, and compare problems using information presented in a bar graph. 2.MD.D.10 ✓ Use interviews, surveys, and observations to collect data that answer questions about students' interests and/or their environment. 2.MD.D.IA.2
2	Students demonstrate basic foundational knowledge of the goal but still need support regarding the more complex ideas.
1	Student's performance reflects beginning to learn foundational skills and knowledge.

This is a sample Grade 2 ELA topic scale for DMPS:

On Track for Reading and Understanding Grade Level Literature	
RL.2.1, RL.2.2, RL.2.3, RL.2.5, RL.2.7	
4	In addition to score 3.0 performance, the student demonstrates in-depth inferences and applications that go beyond the goal.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask and answer questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text. (RL.2.1) • Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral. (RL.2.2) • Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges. (RL.2.3) • Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action. (RL.2.5) * • Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot. (RL.2.7)!
2	Students demonstrate basic foundational knowledge of the goal but still need support regarding the more complex ideas.
1	Student's performance reflects beginning to learn foundational skills and knowledge.

This is a sample Grade 4 Visual Art topic scale for DMPS:

4 th Grade: Creating & Connecting		
<p>Topic Overview:</p> <p>Creating: Refine and complete artistic work</p> <p>Connecting: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding</p>		
Topic	Exceeding Grade Level	Meeting Grade Level
<p>When collecting evidence related to the 3, it will be recorded in these topics in Infinite Campus.</p>		<p>The Level 3 Targets are the grade level expectation for students in all classes. These are directly related to State of Iowa standards. Success Criteria (listed below the target) should be clarified/ revised by the building level PLC as they collaborate to unpack the Level 3 targets.</p> <p>Guiding Question to complete this process:  What are the essential pieces of knowledge students need to have to show progression towards the grade level standard/expectation (level 3)?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Creating & Connecting</p>	<p><i>In addition to meeting the entire learning goal (all learning targets in a topic), a connection is made to one or more of the following: a development from a different historical period, era, or place or a course theme that is not the current focus.</i></p> <p>Possible Task: ★</p>	<p>LTIA- I can collaboratively set goals and create artwork that is meaningful and purposeful. (Creating) Learning that shows evidence of progressing towards grade-level learning target:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I can brainstorm ideas for artwork that has meaning and purpose. <input type="checkbox"/> I can set and follow goals with a group when creating artwork. <input type="checkbox"/> I can create artwork with a group that is meaningful/purposeful. <p>LTIB- I can create original artwork that solves a creative art or design challenge. (Creating) Learning that shows evidence of progressing towards grade-level learning target:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I can brainstorm multiple plans to meet a creative challenge. <input type="checkbox"/> I can choose the best plan to meet a creative challenge. <input type="checkbox"/> I can create an original artwork using my plan. <p>LTIC- I can create artwork that reflects my connection to community, culture, and traditions. (Connecting) Learning that shows evidence of progressing towards grade-level learning target:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I can identify my community, culture, and traditions. <input type="checkbox"/> I can explore community, culture, and traditions of others. <input type="checkbox"/> I can use my knowledge of community, cultures, and traditions to create original art.

Grading Practice 2: Academic achievement is reported separately from behavior.

If we incorporate behavior, attendance, and effort in the score, we no longer consider scores accurate indicators of proficiency of standards. The score should reflect what the student knows and is able to do (Wormeli, 2006).

Measurement that includes behavior does not reflect what the student knows and is able to do academically. We can provide anecdotal evidence, such as amount of time and resources students spend on a task; however, we do not have a commonly accepted, legally justifiable, non-subjective method for measuring how hard or sincerely someone is working. Although we teach behavior the same as we teach academics, the two should NOT be averaged into a score. Inclusion of positive behaviors can artificially inflate grades; inclusion of negative behaviors into performance has been shown to be a disincentive to academic motivation.

<i>Actions Consistent with this Practice:</i>	<i>Actions Inconsistent with this Practice:</i>
Do assess students on academic work, regardless of the time, effort, and participation it took to reach proficiency on a standard o <i>Ex: At quarter/semester, student receives a score based only on a body of academic evidence</i>	Skew a student's assessment score(s) with behaviors such as late work, frequent attempts, attendance, disruptions, or non-participation. o <i>Ex: Don't give student the next higher or lower score at semester because of effort.</i>

A note about participation:

While as a general rule participation is not included in the determination of an SRG score, there will be some circumstances where participation is a specific standard called for in the design of the learning. Examples include, but are not limited to, participation in an academic conversation based upon speaking and listening standards.

This grading practice in action—What might this look like in the classroom?

- From the beginning of a unit or module, the teacher ensures their students understand that they will be assessed on their academic learning of standards through different types of tasks.
 - The teacher also makes sure students understand that their behaviors in the classroom are very important and that their behaviors do impact their academic learning.
 - Teachers work with students to develop shared classroom norms and expectations.
 - Throughout the module/unit, teacher may consider asking students to self-assess their alignment to the shared classroom norms and expectations

Grading Practice 3: Scores are based on a body of evidence.

Body of Evidence

Our purpose in collecting a body of evidence is to:

- Allow teachers to determine a defensible and credible topic score based on a representation of student learning over time.
- Clearly communicate student achievement in relation to the 4-point scale to inform instructional decisions and push student growth.
- Show student learning of targets through varying points of data (See Grading Practice 5).
- Provide opportunities for feedback between student and teacher.

Scoring

A collaborative scoring process is encouraged to align expectations of the Grade-Level standards to artifacts collected. Routine use of a collaborative planning and scoring protocol results in calibration and a collective understanding of Grade-Level proficiency. Enough evidence should be collected to accurately represent a progression of student learning.

Teachers look at all available evidence to determine a topic score. All topic scores should be defensible and credible through a body of evidence.

Bundling of Standards: Focus and Coherence in Instruction and Assessment

While the Standards delineate specific expectations in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language, each standard need not be a separate focus for instruction and assessment. Often several standards can be addressed by a single rich task. (Iowa Academic Standards)

Scales are designed to align with the scope and sequence of our High-Quality Curricula. Assessment components within the curriculum will support evidence collection for monitoring students' progress towards mastery of the standards. *Remember: A piece of quality evidence can be used to evaluate mastery on multiple standards.

ELA: The name of the topic scale will remain the same for each reporting period. The standards within each topic scale will change based on what is taught and assessed in each EL Education Module. The scales reflect how the standards are bundled together.

Math: The name of the topic scale will align with the unit of instruction. Multiple standards are taught and assessed in each unit.

Extended Core: The name of the topic scales will remain the same in each extended core area (Art, Music, PE, and Health) for each reporting period. The topics scales align with national standards (National Core Art Standards, SHAPE Standards).

Role of Homework

In DMPS, we support homework as practice. Homework is not about perfection but about practicing what was learned in the classroom. Teachers should help students understand how homework helps them to master the concepts worked on in class.

Ultimately, what is termed "homework" (practice of new learning away from the classroom) is not within the body of evidence used to determine a topic score.

Progress Reports

The purpose of the progress report is to share information with families regarding their student's progress. Using the standards within each scale, the teacher will provide specific feedback to families around unfinished learning and progress towards grade level expectations and/or extensions.

For example, Student A receives a level 2 for On Track with Reading and Understanding Grade Level Literature. The teacher will have evidence and can communicate with the family that Student A is still struggling with identifying the characters and setting in a story but can successfully tell who is telling the story at various points in a text. This method will hold true for all topics.

Listening and Speaking and Language Standards are included as topics and student progress will be reported to families. Research suggests that children's ability to use language and to listen to and understand the meaning of spoken and written words is related to their literacy achievement in reading, writing, and spelling. These standards, along with reading and writing, support student literacy and complex reasoning skills.

After practicing and working to understand the topics and connected concepts and skills, students are offered different opportunities to give evidence to show that understanding. Teachers use this evidence to determine scores for progress reports. All scores given should be defensible and credible through the evidence collected.

Example:

		Body of Evidence			
Student	Topic Scale: Adding Subtracting and Working with Data	Evidence of Standard 1 (2.OA.A.1)	Evidence of Standard 2 (2.OA.B.2)	Evidence of Standard 3 (2.MD.D.10)	Evidence of Standard 4 (2.MD.D.IA.2)
Student One	2.0* 3.0**	2.0, 3.0, 3.0	2.0, 2.0, 2.0	3.0, 3.0, 3.0	3.0, 2.0, 3.0

Explanation: In this example, a teacher has gathered evidence for all standards of the topic. The teacher identified the student's most recent collected evidence has demonstrated grade level expectations in standard 1, 3, and 4. Student one stills needs to demonstrate grade level expectations in standard 2. Professional judgement is used in making the best scoring decisions for students and communicating their progress with families.

*The teacher may provide a topic score of a 2.0 and feedback to the student's family that student one still needs to demonstrate grade level expectations on standard 2 of the topic.

**Or the teacher may give student one a 3.0 and communicate that student one is able to add and subtract with 20 but needs more practice with fluency.

This same process will be used in all content areas.

Grading Practice 4:

Achievement is organized and reported by learning topic.

Teachers organize and report evidence of student learning using pre-established topics aligned to the Grade-Level standards.

Each topic score is determined by the teacher, by examining evidence collected throughout the quarter/semester (*see Grading Practice 3*). This score is reported on the progress report using the district 4-point scale (*see Grading Practice 1*).

All guidance in this grading practice assumes a teacher has a complete body of evidence from which to determine a topic score. If teachers have an incomplete body of evidence, please follow the guidance of the scale pg. 5

Quarter scores represent the **unweighted average** of a student progress towards the topic. According to Robert Marzano, an unweighted average “simply means that all learning goals are considered equal—no goal has more weight than any other goal” (Marzano, 2010, p. 105).

This grading practice in action—What might this look like in practice?

When assigning a topic score, *it is about assessing that evidence against the Grade-Level Standard in the scale, using professional judgment, and being confident in the topic score assigned.*

A topic score from your body of evidence:

[Directions on how to post Grades](#)

This grading practice in action—What might this look like in practice?

Posting Topic Scores

Big Picture:

- Ensure students have access to the entire learning goal before eventually determining a topic score. Collect a body of evidence. Record it in Infinite Campus. Determine a topic score by using professional judgment. Do not average.

Topic Scores (see also Grading Practice 3):

- Update Infinite Campus topic scores as often as possible, as evidence is collected, so progress on topic scales can be seen by students and families.
- Each time the topic score is updated, use the “post” function in Infinite Campus.
- Most schools require topic scores to be updated every two weeks.

Grading Practice 5: ***Students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate proficiency.***

Multiple Opportunities—Philosophy:

There are two forms of multiple opportunities, both of which require backwards design and intentional planning. One form is opportunities planned by the teacher throughout the unit of study and/or throughout the semester. Our curriculums build on itself: our later topics often provide opportunities to collect evidence of earlier learning. “Multiple opportunities” is about allowing students to demonstrate their learning again throughout the year.

Students will be allowed multiple opportunities to demonstrate grade level standards throughout the school year. Student evidence may also meet multiple standards within and across topics.

Extra Credit

Extra credit does not exist in a standards-based system. Like other behaviors, extra credit distorts a grade. Additional “points” will not be given simply for doing more work or putting in more time.

Grading Practice 6: Accommodations and modifications are provided for exceptional learners.

Multilingual Learners

Language scaffolds in the content areas will be provided to students receiving ELL services when needed. Scores should be assigned based upon grade level expectations. Use the comment section as needed to communicate information on the student's English language proficiency.

Exceptional Learners

Exceptional learners are students whose current performance level is significantly discrepant from grade level standards. Exceptional learners include but are not limited to advanced learners; Twice exceptional learners; students with disabilities, who may have an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) or 504. An exceptional learner may or may not have a 504 or an IEP (Individualized Education Plan).

Adaptations: Two Types

1) Accommodations are adaptations that "level the playing field" for a student. Accommodations **do NOT change the learning standard(s)** for the student but allow the student to participate in and demonstrate mastery of the Grade-Level standards. Decisions to accommodate are made by the teacher. If a student has a 504 or IEP, it is mandatory to provide documented accommodation.

2) Modifications are changes in content and assessment based on the recommendations from the student's educational team. ***The standard(s) itself is modified through a formal team process.***

Advanced Learners

Advanced learners are students that demonstrate potential to perform at significantly higher levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment. An advanced learner may or may not have a PEP (Personalized Education Plan) or an extended learning plan.

Students with Disabilities—Special Education IEP and 504

Schools will use the same report cards for students who have an IEP as they do with general education students.

Students with disabilities may not be discriminated against because of their disability.

Students on the Iowa Alternate Assessment may participate in classes for reasons other than achieving standards and may be graded on Essential Elements.

Progress report may not identify the student as a student with a disability.

Twice Exceptional Learners

Twice exceptional learners are students identified with high potential in one or more areas but also have learning disabilities that make them at risk in meeting their educational and social/emotional needs.



Examples of Adaptations

When the adaptation “levels the playing field” but does not change the standard, it is an accommodation .	When the adaptation alters the standard, it becomes a modification . <i>Remember, a modification to a standard is done rarely and then only by the student’s education team.</i>
Extended Time	
Accommodation: The standard is not changed when the rate/speed is NOT part of the standard. <i>Example: Extended time on a writing prompt</i>	Modification: When rate/speed IS part of the standard <i>Example: Math fact fluency</i>
Having fewer questions on a task or assessment	
Accommodation: When all questions are of equal difficulty and the number given is adjusted but the standard is still measured <i>Example: Fewer questions with equal difficulty on an assessment</i>	Modification: When the complexity of the standard is altered <i>Example: Eliminating the number of answers on a multiple choice test</i>
Use of a calculator	
Accommodation: When the standard is NOT assessing computation <i>Example: Solving one- or two-step equations</i>	Modification: When the standard IS assessing computation fluency <i>Example: Fluently adding and subtracting decimals</i>
Reading text to a student	
Accommodation: When the standard is NOT assessing reading accuracy, fluency, or comprehension <i>Example: Science common assessment</i>	Modification: When the standard IS assessing reading accuracy, fluency, or comprehension <i>Example: English reading common assessment</i>
Enrichment/Extension	
Accommodation: When the learner requires enrichment through differentiation. <i>Example: Flexible cluster groups and an advanced curriculum are provided to learners that have demonstrated the need; each learner is assessed individually</i>	Modification: Grade/content or course level acceleration <i>Example: Making the determination with a building team & Gifted/Advanced support staff to accelerate a 3rd grade student to 4th grade</i>

For further guidance on choosing appropriate accommodations, see “Iowa Guidelines for the Use of Accommodations during Instruction and District Wide Assessments for Students with Disabilities”

<https://www.educateiowa.gov/sites/files/ed/documents/Iowa%20Accommodations%20Guidelines.pdf>

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