Neenah Joint School District

Target-Based Learning and Grading

What is target-based learning and grading (TBLG)?

Target-based learning and grading is an instructional process that connects specific learning targets with instruction and assessment. Research has found that positive achievement occurs for all students when educators intentionally:

- Create and communicate a strong connection between learning targets, classroom learning activities, and classroom assessments
- Provide specific and ongoing feedback related to a student's progress
- Implement learning and grading practices which recognize that students learn at different rates and in different ways

While teachers have been piloting this shift in assessment practices for some time, full implementation of these practices occurred in the fall of 2019 at Horace Mann, Shattuck, and Neenah High School. Using a target-based learning and grading approach, students and parents will notice several shifts in how students are learning, being assessed, and receiving feedback at the middle and high school level.

The use of specific learning targets

Student learning and assessment will be focused on specific learning targets. A learning target is an "I can" statement that clearly defines what a student knows and can do with content or skills delivered in the classroom. Examples of learning targets are:

- I can find the area of a triangle.
- I can differentiate between income and expense.
- I can provide a summary of a text without stating a personal opinion or judgements.

Over the past three years, NJSD staff have been creating learning targets that are aligned with standards in each curricular area. Student learning and assessment is designed around those learning targets in each course. This approach provides instructors with the opportunity to ground their professional judgement in specific learning targets creating an environment in which student assessment grades are more reliable and reflective of what students know and can do with course material and skills. This approach also promotes greater reliability and consistency among evaluators.

Neenah Joint School District proficiency scale

Students will receive ongoing feedback related to or connected with each learning target throughout the duration of the course. Some targets may be addressed one time while others will be addressed multiple times throughout a course. This feedback will let students know how deeply they have learned each target, including if more growth is needed.

For each learning target, students will receive feedback using a three level scale. **Proficient** means that the student demonstrates and applies a ***comprehensive*** understanding of the learning target at that point in the school year. **Developing** means that the student demonstrates and/or applies a ***partial*** understanding of the learning target at that point in the school year. **Beginning** means that the student demonstrates ***minimal*** understanding of the learning target at that point in the school year.

Proficient	Developing	Beginning
The student demonstrates and applies a *comprehensive* understanding of concepts and skills at this point in the school year.	The student demonstrates and/or applies a *partial* understanding of concepts and skills at this point in the school year.	The student demonstrates a *minimal* understanding of concepts and skills at this point in the school year.

How are grades calculated using learning targets?

Based on the evidence provided from formative and summative assessments, a student's growth toward proficiency on each learning target will be assessed as **proficient**, **developing**, or **beginning**. In the past, grades were determined using a point system. In TBLG, grades are determined by the assessment of each learning target. More specifically, the percentage of targets on which students have achieved proficiency, or comprehensive understanding of concepts or skills. At the end of a grading period, using the rating on each learning target, a letter grade will be calculated as follows:

$$\frac{(\text{Green Targets} \times 3) + (\text{Yellow Targets} \times 2) + (\text{Red Targets} \times 1)}{\text{Total Targets}}$$

Target Average Range	Letter Grade
2.845 - 3.000	A
2.765 - 2.844	A-
2.695 - 2.764	B+
2.545 - 2.694	B
2.465 - 2.544	B-
2.395 - 2.464	C+
2.245 - 2.394	C
2.165 - 2.244	C-
2.095 - 2.164	D+
1.995 - 2.094	D
< or = 1.994	F

Reassessment

Students will have multiple opportunities during the course to demonstrate their level of proficiency relative to specific learning targets and receive ongoing feedback to help them improve through reassessment. These opportunities exist for students to take a summative assessment or part of a summative assessment a second time (or more) to demonstrate proficiency on that learning target. Instructors may choose to approach these opportunities in many ways. Teachers may choose to use an assessment given later in the semester to give a student an opportunity to show his/her growth toward proficiency. These opportunities may not be the exact same test, project, essay, or other form of assessment. In order for reassessment to be effective, it is typically necessary for students to engage in additional learning opportunities to practice a skill on which they will be reassessed. This will help to assure that students have demonstrated appropriate skill enhancement in order to exhibit growth toward proficiency. It is not a requirement that instructors provide "unlimited retake" opportunities. Rather, opportunities for reassessment are intended to ensure that a student has a chance to meet proficiency in a way that meets his/her needs. The process of reassessment is an opportunity to demonstrate proficiency and growth and should not be abused by students. It is the expectation that students complete formative work to support the learning process. Teachers will communicate with students and parents when this privilege is being abused and will determine the course of action resulting from a student's failure to fully engage in the learning process.

Monitoring In-progress Grades

The Parent Portal in Infinite Campus (IC) will communicate consistent, in-progress grades throughout a term. Students and parents will be able to monitor progress related to each learning target in addition to monitoring a student's overall grade. This provides our students and parents with more detail relative to a student's areas of strength and areas for growth.

Guidance for Missing Assessments

The strong alignment between course learning targets and course assessments is the strength of TBLG. Therefore, it is expected that students enrolled in a course will complete all the assessments associated with that course to determine both proficiency on each learning target and a final course grade. There are extenuating circumstances where a teacher could exempt a student from an assessment, however, this would be a rare occurrence and determined by the teacher on an individual basis.

Most students are prepared and present to complete an assessment on the scheduled date. There are situations, however, when students are absent or are not prepared on assessment day. To help manage these situations, the following teacher practice is recommended and will be supported by administration:

- Ensure students are ready to participate in an assessment before it is given
- Assessments are completed in the order that they are assigned (a missing assessment should be completed by a student before the next assessment is taken)
- A course grade of incomplete will be earned at semester grading time if there are any missing assessments. When a semester grade is incomplete, the student will have ten school days to complete the missing assessments before a final course grade is issued.

When a student is missing an assessment in the gradebook

There are a variety of reasons why a student may miss an assessment. When assessment scores are entered into the IC gradebook and a student has not yet taken the assessment, instructors will record it in the gradebook as follows:

- The instructor will enter red for each target measured on the missing assessment
- The instructor will place a "flag" on each target and missing assessment
- The instructor will work with the student to complete the assessment as soon as the student is ready and before the next assessment is given

When new scores on the targets are available from the completed assessment, the instructor will update the IC gradebook with the new scores (replace the reds with the new scores for each target and remove the missing designation for each target). Upon completion of the assessment, the new grade will be posted to the IC gradebook.

Dual enrollment course at Neenah High School

Neenah High School continues to offer a wide range of dual enrollment courses to all students. These courses are courses offered through post-secondary institutions of learning such as the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, Fox Valley Technical College among others and are taught by Neenah High School teachers. As these courses are governed by course policies at the post-secondary institution, some may be required to use a traditional grading structure and not a TBLG approach. Neenah High School teachers will work with instructors from the post-secondary institutions as it relates to course assessment policies. These policies will be communicated to parents/guardians through course syllabi.

Grading Periods

The table below provides a detailed description of the grading periods for each level within NJSD. The descriptors within each cell provide the manner in which each grade will be communicated.

Level	9 weeks	18 weeks	27 weeks	36 weeks
4K-5	Parent-Teacher Conferences	Report card	Parent-Teacher Conferences	Report card
6-8*	Grades will be posted in Infinite Campus but will not be included on a transcript; this grade should be considered a progress grade; not a formal grade.	Grades will be posted in Infinite Campus and will be posted to students' official transcript. A formal grade report will be issued.	Grades will be posted in Infinite Campus but will not be included on a transcript; this grade should be considered a progress grade; not a formal grade.	Grades will be posted in Infinite Campus and will be posted to students' official transcript. A formal grade report will be issued.
9-12*	Grades will be posted in Infinite Campus but will not be included on a transcript; this grade can be considered a progress grade.	Grades will be posted in Infinite Campus and will be posted to students' official transcript. A formal grade report will be issued.	Grades will be posted in Infinite Campus but will not be included on a transcript; this grade can be considered a progress grade.	Grades will be posted in Infinite Campus and will be posted to students' official transcript. A formal grade report will be issued.

*The 9 week intervals of grades posted in IC serves the function of determining eligibility for activities at both the middle and high school level. When grades are posted in IC, a number of activity groupings and reports can be run to efficiently determine eligibility, participation in activities, proactive screening, etc. IC is the best system (currently) to utilize to meet the necessary purposes listed above.

For a year long course, after 1st semester, the proficiency ratings collected for each learning target will begin anew at the beginning of 2nd semester. This practice will provide consistency in grading practices when a different teacher is assigned at semester for a year long course.

Appendix: Definitions of Common Terms

Definitions--The following definitions provide clarity on the ideas and concepts described through this document.

Learning Target: This is an "*I can …..* " statement that very specifically and clearly communicates what the student should know and/or be able to do. For example:

- *I can analyze and interpret data.*
- *I can draw an accurate force diagram.*

Learning targets are based on overarching standards (broad statements defining the knowledge, skills and concepts of the course) and become the basis for instruction, assessment and feedback, for both students and parents.

District Proficiency Levels:

Proficient	Developing	Beginning
Student demonstrates and applies a *comprehensive* understanding of concepts and skills at this point in the school year.	Student demonstrates and/or applies a *partial* understanding of concepts and skills at this point in the school year.	Student demonstrates a *minimal* understanding of concepts and skills at this point in the school year.

Assessment: measures student progress toward learning target(s); if the assessment addresses multiple learning targets, each learning target is measured independently; no overall, holistic score/color/proficiency level is given on an assessment when more than one learning target is assessed.

Common Summative Assessment: assessment of learning; created collaboratively; aligned to learning targets; prepared before instruction begins and is mindful of learning targets; implemented under common conditions--for example, use of a calculator, untimed; scored commonly using the district scoring rubric; data analyzed collaboratively to determine next steps for instruction as well as identifying program needs; end of learning cycle assessments; used to determine course grade

Formative Assessment: assessment for learning; frequently used to determine next steps for instruction; provides information needed to adjust teaching while learning is in progress; examples are: exit slips, quiz, bell ringers/warm-ups, self-assessment, class work, and practice; formative assessment data is not used in the final grade