

Assessment FOR Learning



POLICY TO PRACTICE

SECTION 4: DETERMINING THE GRADE

a) Introduction

The primary purpose of grading is to communicate achievement of the curriculum expectations to students, parents and other educators. Information in this section of the resource document will assist teachers in determining final grades and completing the term and final report cards. Throughout each term, classroom teachers will have worked diligently with each of their students and will want to be **confident** they can justify the grade they will assign to each student.

Keeping in mind that the primary purpose of Assessment and Evaluation is to improve student learning, the following steps and questions will assist you in the process of determining the grade.

Step 1: Identify and review relevant assessment and evaluation information

- Have I been careful to exclude Diagnostic Assessment data in the determination of the final grade?
- What, if any, Formative Assessment data may be used to support my professional judgement in determining the final grade for each student?
- Have I separated Learning Skills from the grading process, unless they are specific curriculum expectations?

Step 2: Apply achievement levels to judge student performance

- With reference to the achievement charts, at what level is each student's performance?
- Does the assessment data I've collected reflect a balance of the four categories?
- Have I considered the more recent, most consistent achievement of each student, indicative of progress and learning, as opposed to using an average.
- Is my professional judgement supported by a body of evidence?
- If I number crunch, do I use the median rather than the mean?

Step 3: Assign a grade or mark that corresponds with that level of achievement

- Will the grade and comments generated by this process contribute to improving learning for each student?
- Have I identified strengths, areas for improvement/weaknesses and next steps?
- Is my professional judgement supported by a body of evidence?

“
The bottom line is that grading should be seen not merely as a numerical, mechanical exercise, but as an exercise in professional judgement.
”

(Ken O'Connor)



This section of the resource document includes:

- **Determining the Grade**
 - STEP 1: Identify and review relevant assessment and evaluation information
 - STEP 2: Apply achievement levels to judge student performance
 - STEP 3: Assign a grade or mark that corresponds with that level of achievement
- **Frequently Asked Questions**

b) Determining the Grade

Levels of achievement describe the degree to which students have met the curriculum expectations and have been able to demonstrate what they know and can do. The following outlines a three-step process that can be used for determining a percentage grade or final report card level.

STEP 1: Review relevant assessment and evaluation information

Teachers must review the assessment information for the student, determining a representative sample of work to use as evidence of achievement, and consider the significance of more recent evidence. It is important to distinguish among what is assessed, what is used to report to parents and students, and what is used to determine the student's grade. The grade is just one component of the report card. **The primary purpose of the grade is to communicate achievement of curriculum expectations to students, parents and other educators.**

Keep track of the assessment tasks on an ongoing basis.

- Indicate whether it is diagnostic, formative, summative
- Record which of the four categories is represented, or record a mark separately for each of the four categories assessed by the task. (An assessment task will often not include all four.)
- Record the mark as it was communicated to the student (6/10, A, 71%, 3-)
- If the assessment task was submitted late, record this on the learning skills tracking sheet. If it was not done, record this appropriately.

CAN BE INCLUDED IN GRADE	MUST NOT BE INCLUDED IN GRADE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Performance and products through which a student's knowledge and skills are demonstrated<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Processes through which a student's knowledge and skills are observed <p>For example, data observed and collected from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paper/pencil tasks (write)• Personal communication tasks (say)• Performance tasks (do)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Data from practice assessments, pre-tests, coaching activities or feedback<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Attitudes and behaviours<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Learning skills not identified as a curriculum expectation <p>For example, data from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diagnostic assessments• Learning skills• Attendance and punctuality• Participation or effort



STEP 2: Apply achievement levels to judge student performance

Teachers must use the achievement chart in curriculum policy documents to judge the assessment information gathered and to evaluate the student's performance of the expectations.

Using Achievement Charts

LEVEL	SUMMARY DESCRIPTION	CLARIFYING INFORMATION	GRADE
Level 4	The achievement is above the provincial standard.	Level 4 represents a very high to outstanding level of achievement of the curriculum expectations for the course. Level 4 does not mean the student 'got 80% of it'. Percentage grades are related to more than the 'amount', the frequency, or the accuracy of learning. Percentage grades are related to the achievement levels that also describe the breadth and depth of understanding, and the complexity, clarity, and precision of responses. Level 4 is not limited to students who are 'near the top of the class'. Student performance at all levels must be referenced to the descriptors of the achievement levels, a standard that is stable and not dependent on the general ability of a given group, rather than compared to the performance of other students in the class or school.	80-100% A- / A / A+
Level 3	The achievement meets the provincial standard.	Level 3 (the provincial standard) represents a high level of achievement. Level 3 indicates that the student is well-prepared for work at the next grade or course.	70-79% B- / B / B+
Level 2	The achievement is below but approaching the provincial standard.	Level 2 represents a moderate level of achievement that is approaching the standard. The standard is within reach, given that appropriate actions are taken by the student.	60-69% C- / C / C+
Level 1	The achievement falls much below the provincial standard.	Level 1 represents a low, but passable, level of achievement of course expectations. The student's performance allows for a pass in the course, but the student's plans to take any subsequent courses involving these skills should be reviewed.	50-59% D- / D / D+
R	No credit given, remediation required.	The student's performance does not reflect the achievement of the curriculum expectations.	Below 50% R



Evaluation Process

Teachers must consider each of the following steps in this checklist as they examine the data gathered **for each achievement chart category**:

- ☐ ***Look at the body of evidence.***
When looking at the body of evidence, teachers must make decisions on the relative emphasis of the data collected by considering:
 - the complexity of the task (a short paper/pencil task does not provide the same kind of information about student achievement as does a complex one);
 - the information from the four knowledge and skills categories; and
 - the assessment methods used to collect the data based on what students write, say and/or do.
- ☐ ***Understand the meaning of Levels 1-4.***
Teachers must refer to the achievement chart for their subject discipline for specific criteria and examine the descriptors of each for the achievement levels. Information for specific curriculum documents can be found in [Part 4B\(i\) of the CODE document](#).
- ☐ ***Find the most consistent level of performance.***
The most consistent does not always mean the most frequent. Often student performance is not consistent and will vary greatly throughout the term. In those cases, the numerical 'most frequent' performance may not fairly represent a student's performance over the term. Instead, teachers should select an achievement level that best summarizes the student's overall performance in relation to the achievement of the curriculum expectations being evaluated.
- ☐ ***Give special consideration to the more recent information.***
Grades should be based on the student's demonstrations of learning after multiple opportunities to learn and practice. Demonstrations near the end of the course may be a more appropriate indicator of student achievement. For some skills, recent evaluation *may* provide the best data to judge overall achievement of the expectations. This reflects the capacity of students to build their skills and understanding of concepts over the time spent in the course.
- ☐ ***Apply professional judgement to assign the achievement level.***
The nature of teaching and learning requires the application of professional judgement on decisions about student performance. Based on knowledge of the program and the descriptors in the achievement levels, the teacher can use numerical data, along with the understanding of the classroom context and the body of evidence, to apply professional judgement in determining the achievement level that best describes the overall performance of the student.
- ☐ ***Apply 'number crunching' carefully.***
When using numerical data, calculating the average (mean) or middle (median) mark can assist teachers to judge student performance. In order to properly determine the final report card grade, you need to use professional judgement to determine achievement in each category of learning. Term marks that are recorded in levels attached to the four categories of learning allow the teacher to more easily apply professional judgement when determining the final report card grade.



Cautions

When the numerical calculation and the level of achievement are not consistent, the teacher must consider other factors in the evaluations that are causing a lack of alignment, such as the following:

- Did the weightings or the design of the evaluations cause imbalance? (e.g., the emphasis of the categories was inappropriate)
- Did the assessments allow students a variety of ways to demonstrate what they know and can do? (e.g., some students do not 'test' well, but can effectively demonstrate their skills if afforded other means)
- Was the student penalized too heavily for early attempts at learning when recent assessments clearly show that the student has attained the necessary skills?

Assigning zeroes does not support Assessment for Learning in any way.

STEP 3: Assign a grade or mark that corresponds with that level of achievement

Percentage marks on the report card reflect the levels of achievement. Percentage grades are intended to communicate to students and to parents more than a numerical average. Grades communicate student achievement of the course curriculum expectations as they relate to the four levels of achievement and to the provincial standard (e.g., Level 3 – the student is well prepared to continue work in this subject area).

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Averaging falls far short of providing an accurate description of what students have learned If the purpose of grading and reporting is to provide an accurate description of what students have learned, then averaging must be considered inadequate and inappropriate.

”

(Thomas R. Guskey, “Communicating Student Learning.”
ACSD Yearbook, 1996)



What is insanity?
Doing the same thing over and over
and expecting things to improve.

(Albert Einstein)



Not everything that counts
can be counted
and not everything
that can be counted, counts.

(Albert Einstein)

“

Data should be used
to inform
not to determine
decisions.

”

(Hay Group)

Assessments involve students and their
peers as well as their teacher but
responsibility for evaluation rests with
the teacher.



Steps in Determining the Final Grade

Sample 1 — ELEMENTARY

STEP	INSTRUCTIONS	KNOWLEDGE	THINKING / INQUIRY	COMMUNICATION	APPLICATION
		There should be a balance between the four categories in determining the overall level and determining the grade			
Determine level	Consider the most consistent and more recent evidence to determine the level achieved for each category.	4	3	3	2
Determine overall level	Use professional judgement to determine the overall level of achievement that best describes the student's overall performance for the term.	3			
Conversion (Grade 7/8)	This mark needs to be reported as a % at grade 7/8 level.	75			

Use achievement levels in all categories of learning to develop report card's strengths, weaknesses and next steps.




Steps in Determining the Final Grade

Sample 2 — SECONDARY

The following chart outlines one approach to determining the final grade. The relevant emphasis of the achievement chart categories is being addressed equally.

Calculating 70% of the Final Grade

STEP	INSTRUCTIONS	KNOWLEDGE 25%	THINKING / INQUIRY 25%	COMMUNICATION 25%	APPLICATION 25%
Determine level	Consider the most consistent and more recent evidence to determine the level achieved for each category.	4	3	3	2
Convert to a percentage	Use the conversion chart (see Section 3 page 4) to translate each achievement chart category to a percentage.	88	75	75	65
Achievement chart category emphasis	Multiply each of the percentages by the predetermined achievement chart category weighting (here, 25%)	25% 22	25% 18.8	25% 18.8	25% 16.8
Calculate the mark out of 100	Total each of the four categories together for a mark out of 100.	76.4			
<div><div></div><div>Stop here if calculating midterm grade (semestered) or 1st / 2nd term grade (non-semestered) or if you are teaching a course that does not require a 30% final assessment. Enter 75% on report card</div></div> <div>When completing a final report card, continue with the steps below:</div>					
Calculate the mark out of 70	Multiply this mark by 70% (76.4 x .70)	53.5			
Determine strengths / weaknesses / next steps	Use the level of achievement in the four categories to determine strengths, areas for improvement and next steps.				

REFLECTION —

Am I comfortable using professional judgement and “eyeballing” to determine the grade?



Calculating 30% of the Final Grade

Follow the breakdown of the final 30% evaluation — for example, 10% paper and pencil task (e.g., written examination), 20% performance task (e.g., simulation).

Identify the related key learnings (clusters of expectations) and their related achievement chart categories for each assessment strategy.

STEP	INSTRUCTIONS	EXAMPLE				
Determine the level of performance	Examine the evidence on the final evaluation. NOTE: final evaluations should incorporate similar weightings of the categories relevant to the curriculum expectations being assessed.	Category	K	T	C	A
		Performance Task (20%)		3	3	3
		Pencil / Paper Task (10%)	3		3	
		3				
Determine the percentage out of 100%	Use a conversion chart (see Section 3 page 4) to translate the level to a percentage.	75				
Calculate the 30% mark	Multiply this percentage by 30% to determine the final mark out of 30.	22.5				

The student's final grade is calculated by adding the mark out of 70 and the mark out of 30 to get a mark out of 100%.

Mark out of 70%	Mark out of 30%		Mark out of 100%	
53.5	+	22.5	=	76%

“

Grading by the median provides more opportunities for success by diminishing the impact of a few stumbles and by rewarding hard work.

”

(Russell G. Wright, “Success for All: The Median is the Key.” Phi Delta Kappan)



Steps in Determining the Final Grade

Sample 3 — SECONDARY

The following chart outlines one approach to determining the final grade. The relevant emphasis of the achievement chart categories has been weighted differently. Secondary is the only place where the category weights may be weighted differently.


Calculating 70% of the Final Grade

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Educators must abandon the average or arithmetic mean as the predominant measurement of student achievement.

”

(D. Reeves, “Standards Are Not Enough: Essential Transformations for School Success.” NASSP Bulletin)

STEP	INSTRUCTIONS	KNOWLEDGE 35%	THINKING / INQUIRY 25%	COMMUNICATION 20%	APPLICATION 20%
Determine level	Consider the most consistent and more recent evidence to determine the level achieved for each category.	3	3+	2+	4
Convert to a percentage	Use the conversion chart (see Section 3 page 4) to translate each achievement chart category to a percentage.	75	78	68	88
Achievement chart category emphasis	Multiply each of the percentages by the predetermined achievement chart category weighting (Note: Some boards have published category weightings.)	35% 26.3	25% 19.5	20% 13.6	20% 17.6
Calculate the mark out of 100	Total each of the four categories together for a mark out of 100.	77.0			
<div><div></div><div>Stop here if calculating midterm grade (semestered) or 1st / 2nd term grade (non-semestered) or if you are teaching a course that does not require a 30% final assessment. Enter 76% on report card</div></div> <div>When completing a final report card, continue with the steps below:</div>					
Calculate the mark out of 70	Multiply this mark by 70% (77.0 x .70)	53.9%			
Determine strengths / weaknesses / next steps	Use the level of achievement in the four categories to determine strengths, areas for improvement and next steps.				

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GRADING AND REPORTING AT-A-GLANCE

MARK BOOK LEVEL	GRADE 1-6	GRADE 7-8	GRADE 9-12	LEVEL INTERPRETATION	MIDTERM REPORT CARD COMMENT	END OF SEMESTER/YEAR REPORT CARD COMMENT
SECTION ONE — ACHIEVEMENT						
4++	A+	90-100	95-100	++ Highest Range — Level 4 only. An outstanding level of achievement of all the descriptors for level 4	Subject specific comments for strengths, areas for improvement and next steps.	Subject specific comments for strengths, areas for improvement and next steps. Subject passed / Credit granted.
4+			90-94	+ Higher Range Level Indicates solid consistent demonstration of all the descriptors for the level		
4	A	88	85-89			
4-	A-	82	80-84			
3+	B+	78	77-79	Mid Range Level indicates solid consistent demonstration of most of the descriptors for the level		
3	B	75	74-76			
3-	B-	72	70-73			
2+	C+	68	67-69			
2	C	65	64-66			
2-	C-	62	60-63			
1+	D+	58	57-59			
1	D	55	54-56			
1-	D-	52	50-53			
SECTION TWO — INSUFFICIENT ACHIEVEMENT						
"R"	R	45	45	Indicates that the student is able to achieve some course expectations in limited ways. However, achievement is insufficient to warrant passing the Subject / granting a Credit	Insufficient achievement of curriculum expectations; credit at risk	Insufficient achievement of curriculum expectations; Subject not passed / Credit not granted
	R	R OR 43	40	Indicates that the student has difficulty achieving most of the course expectations		
		R OR 40	35	Indicates that the student has difficulty achieving any course expectations		
SECTION THREE — INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE						
"I"	R	38	30	Indicates that the student has missed or failed to complete some summative evaluation activities and that evidence of achievement is insufficient to warrant passing the Subject / granting a Credit	Current evidence of achievement is insufficient; credit at risk	Insufficient evidence of achievement; Subject not passed / Credit not granted
			20	Indicates that the student has provided little or no evidence of achievement		

Calculating 30% of the Final Grade

Follow the breakdown of the final 30% evaluation [for example, 10% paper and pencil task (e.g., written examination), 20% performance task (e.g., simulation)].

Identify the related key learnings (clusters of expectations) and their related achievement chart categories for each assessment strategy.

STEP	INSTRUCTIONS	EXAMPLE				
Determine the level of performance	Examine the evidence on the final evaluation. NOTE: final evaluations should incorporate similar weightings of the categories relevant to the curriculum expectations being assessed.	Category	K	T	C	A
		Performance Task (20%)		3	3	3
		Pencil / Paper Task (10%)	3		3	
		3				
Determine the percentage out of 100%	Use a conversion chart (see Section 3 page 4) to translate the level to a percentage.	75				
Calculate the 30% mark	Multiply this percentage by 30% to determine the final mark out of 30.	22.5				

The student's final grade is calculated by adding the mark out of 70 and the mark out of 30 to get a mark out of 100%.

Mark out of 70%		Mark out of 30%		Mark out of 100%
53.4	+	22.5	=	75.9 or 76%

**c) Frequently Asked Questions****1. Should late assignments and/or early submissions impact on the student's final grade?**

- No. These are reported on the achievement of learning skills.
- There are no curriculum expectations that are tied explicitly to late and early submission of assignments.
- Date of submission is not related to achievement of curriculum expectations or any of the four categories of the achievement chart.



R

- The “**R**” **indicator** should be used for Elementary and Secondary **markbooks** to indicate the student is struggling with the expectations.
- The “**R**” **may only be used for reporting on the Provincial Report Card Grades 1-8** to indicate that additional learning has to occur before the student will begin to achieve success with the grade expectations. “**R**” is used to flag the need for remediation and parental involvement. “**R**” should not be used repeatedly on the report card. (“**R**” excerpts taken from the *Guide to the Provincial Report Card Grades 1-8*).

Report Card Grades and Comments for Insufficient Achievement

R or 45 — **Elementary**
(*Student’s name*) is able to demonstrate in a limited way some of the expectations in (*subject*).

45 — **Secondary**
(*Student’s name*) is able to demonstrate in a limited way some of the expectations in this course. Insufficient achievement of curriculum expectations; credit not granted.

R or 43 — **Elementary**
(*Student’s name*) is having difficulty demonstrating most of the expectations in (*subject*).

40 — **Secondary**
(*Student’s name*) has difficulty demonstrating most of the expectations in this course. Insufficient achievement of curriculum expectations; credit not granted.

R or 40 — **Elementary**
(*Student’s name*) is having great difficulty demonstrating any of the expectations in (*subject*).

35 — **Secondary**
(*Student’s name*) had great difficulty in demonstrating any of the expectations in this course. Insufficient achievement of curriculum expectations; credit not granted.

I

The “**I**” **indicator** can be used for Elementary and Secondary **markbooks** to indicate insufficient evidence. It **cannot be used on the Provincial Report Card in either Elementary or Secondary**.

Report Card Grades and Comments for Insufficient Evidence

38 — **Elementary**
(*Student’s name*) has failed to complete some of the required tasks / activities and has shown insufficient evidence of the expectations in (*subject*). Please refer to the Learning Skills section for further details.

30 — **Secondary**
(*Student’s name*) has failed to complete a significant number of the required assessment tasks/activities and has shown insufficient evidence of achievement of the expectations for this course; credit not granted. Please refer to Learning Skills section of the report card.

20 — **Secondary**
(*Student’s name*) has failed to complete any of the required assessment tasks/activities and has shown insufficient evidence of achievement of the expectations for this course; credit not granted. Please refer to Learning Skills section of the report card.



2. What is a sufficient amount of evidence in order to provide an accurate picture of a student's achievement?

- There is no definite or set amount of evidence. There needs to be enough evidence to determine “justifiable” grades.
- Evidence must include each of the four categories of the achievement chart.
- Teachers should feel confident that the evidence that they have gathered is sufficient on which to base a judgement of the achievement of the expectations.
- Sufficient evidence includes a combination of “work in progress” and graded work that gives the teacher, the parents, and the student a clear picture of the student's level of ability.

3. What is the most consistent level of achievement?

- Teachers should use their professional judgement to review a student's learning over time.
- The student's grade should not be impacted negatively by a single, poor result.
- The grade should reflect, more often than not, the trend of the student's learning. Anomalies should be reviewed carefully to determine the reason for their occurrence and whether they should impact on the student's grade.

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Grading and reporting will always involve some degree of subjectivity; therefore, grading and reporting should always be done in reference to established criteria and performance standards (*i.e., in Ontario, the expectations and achievement levels*). The grade should be an accurate reflection of what the student has learned.

”

(Thomas R. Guskey)

4. What is meant by more recent?

- More recent evidence is often most relevant to skill development.
- More recent evidence may not apply to the acquisition of discrete facts and information.
- More recent evidence should be used where you are looking for growth over time.
- More recent evidence should be used when earlier conceptual learning is used in higher-level ways.
- Greater insights might be expected towards the end of the course rather than at the beginning.

5. Should missed and/or incomplete assignments impact on the student's final grade?

- Missed and incomplete assignments do impact the student's grade depending on the number of missed assessments, significance of the assessment, and whether the same expectations are re-assessed later.
- Each individual situation will require different decisions and teacher professional judgement.
- Missed and/or incomplete assignments should impact on the FINAL grade where there are a significant number of curriculum expectations that have not been assessed because of missed assignments.
- Missed and/or incomplete assignments should not impact on the FINAL grade where the curriculum expectations have been addressed and/or assessed through another assessment process.