

## Proficiency FAQ for Parents and Students

### **What is proficiency grading and why has this change been made?**

Proficiency grading is really just what it sounds like. Grades for students are based on students demonstrating knowledge and skills to a level of proficiency in a content standard or area of study. The reason this change has been made comes from the research on learning and an Oregon 2011 statute change that requires school policies to allow students to earn credits through a proficiency model. Probably the most significant change that students see is that the way a student behaves in class, positively or negatively, does not impact their academic grade. A student's grade truly reflects what a student knows or is able to do for each content area.

### **What is a formative assessment?**

Formative assessments are any avenue used to give feedback to students about where they currently are on the proficiency continuum for any learning target. The key to effective formative assessments is feedback. Students often underestimate or have an inflated sense of what they know, and they may not see the value of assessments unless they are given timely feedback and specific direction on how they may improve.

### **What is a summative assessment?**

Summative assessments are given to allow students to demonstrate their knowledge of the learning targets. Summative assessments should only be given once students have received ample feedback on formative assessments. Based on this feedback, both the student and the teacher should have a good idea of how a student will perform on a summative assessment. This feedback process will alleviate the students' use of the first attempt at a summative assessment as a "trial run" to see what is being covered.

### **Why is there a difference in meets/proficient for the high school and middle school?**

To earn credit at the high school, a student must earn a C or better, therefore, the MEETS level on the proficiency continuum is equivalent to earning credit. At the middle school, credit is not awarded, so the proficiency continuum solely represents students' progress towards mastery. Here, students are experiencing proficiency for the first time. Having more steps available to show students' growth towards proficiency allows students to experience success as they reach new levels. Experiencing this success may motivate students to continue to work towards MASTERY.

### **How has homework been used in a traditional grading system?**

When homework is used as a classroom management tool, it devalues the intended learning expectations. Students are often motivated by the points given for homework rather than the learning derived from completing it. In the traditional setting, graded homework was often used as a reward for effort or hard work, even if a student's learning didn't increase or change. Lastly, homework often inflated the grades of students who tested poorly (Vatterott).

**What is a process assessment?**

A process assessment is any task that the instructor wishes to record as being important to their course, but does not necessarily reflect a student's level of academic proficiency. Examples could include bringing required materials to class, note taking, maintaining a binder, out-of-class practice reviewed as a group, or participation in a group exercise. Process assessments can improve communication with parents and students as well as be a record of students' activities in the classroom. Since process assessments are not authentic evaluations of a student's proficiency level, the proficiency codes (MTS, ADV, MAS, etc) will not be used.