BEAR CREEK HIGH SCHOOL
Homework and Grading Policy

Philosophy:

In order to reflect current research-based best practices, BCHS is transitioning from a teacher-driven/passive student academic environment to a student-driven/teacher-facilitated environment.   To shift responsibility to students, teachers must give students more control over learning: what they learn, how they learn, and how they demonstrate they have learned it. **Empowerment is motivational.**

Policy:

As a school community we commit to the following practices/policies:

1. Designing quality assignments and assessments.

2. Practicing research-based instructional strategies.

3. Grades reflecting proficiency levels based on standards.

4. Differentiating instruction and assessment to maximize student learning.

5. Teachers working together to create common learning experiences and grading practices in Collaborative Content Teams.

6. Students engaging in the learning process to develop, maintain, and enhance proficiency.

7. Students taking responsibility for their learning and utilizing the student support programs to ensure academic success.

"To reach our long term goals as well as to meet short-term academic purposes, it is necessary to create a new homework paradigm that focuses on academic success for all students."

- Cathy Vatterott

1. Designing Quality Assignments and Assessments

Policy:

The faculty of Bear Creek High School is committed to designing quality assignments and assessments, each of which affects students' motivation to approach the task and their perseverance in completing it:

- **Academic Purpose**: Tasks will have a clear academic purpose

- **Competence**: Tasks will have a positive effect on a student's sense of competence

- **Ownership**: Tasks will be personally relevant and customized to promote ownership of learning

- **Differentiation:** Reflect student choice, readiness level, learning styles

2. Practicing research-based instructional strategies

Policy:

The faculty of Bear Creek High School is committed to using the following strategies to engage students in the learning process:

- **Pre-learning:** Provide an introduction to a topic or background for a more in-depth lesson

- **Checking for understanding**: An opportunity for teachers to gain insights into student learning

- **Practice:** An opportunity for students to practice a skill or something they have already learned

- **Processing:** An opportunity for students to apply, analyze, summarize, and reflect on information they have already learned

"Providing feedback is diagnostic – the teacher is working as an advocate for the student. Should all homework be graded? No. Should all homework receive feedback? Yes."

- Cathy Vatterott

3. Grades reflecting proficiency levels based on standards

Policy: The faculty of Bear Creek High School is committed to creating grades that are primarily based on proficiency by:

- Working together to create consistent gradebooks, within Collaborative Content Teams, in which:

    - The sum of proficiency-based categories will be AT LEAST 60% of the overall grade.

        Summative (proficiency-based) grades are defined as follows:

        - A = Mastery (exceeds standards)
        - B = Proficiency (meets standards)
        - C = Partially Proficient (progressing towards standards)
        - D = Partially Proficient (NOT progressing towards standards)
        - F = Unsatisfactory (no evidence of standards achievement)

    - The sum of learning experience-based categories will be NO MORE THAN 40% of the overall grade.

        - Practice work and assignments should be used as an opportunity for feedback.
        - If a formative assignment or practice work is given a point value, it should be given for completion with feedback provided not for mastery.
- Working to find common ground between best practices in grading and community needs.

Definitions of Types of Assessments:
- ✓ Pre-assessment: an instrument to determine student readiness for content and skill development. **Pre-Assessment Informs Planning**
- ✓ Formative assessment: tools used on a regular basis to provide information about the learning progress of your students, as well as to inform your instructional planning . **Formative = Feedback**
- ✓ Summative assessments: assessments that align with learning goals and instruction that was implemented during the curriculum unit. **Summative = Graded**

Classroom Strategies / Practices:
- Proficiency grades based primarily upon summative, not formative, experiences
- Accurate grades are based on patterns of achievement, including trends, over time (mode or median, not average). Most recent scores are weighted heavier than earlier scores.
- Teachers use criterion-referenced basis for measuring proficiency (i.e. rubrics).
- Providing a proficiency score using a 5-point proficiency scale, where the following means:
    - 5 = Mastery   4 = Proficiency 3 = Partially Proficient 2 – 1 = Unsatisfactory
- Teachers provide multiple opportunities for and alternative methods of assessing proficiency.
- BCHS teachers and administrators will educate the community and keep dialogue open.
- Work needs to be given back to students within 5 days – with feedback – or academic value is lost.
- Eliminate the killer zero.

"In differentiated classrooms, we don't grade homework. Homework is a practice, not a demonstration of mastery, and letter grades are saved for declarations of mastery."

- Rick Wormeli

4. Differentiating instruction and assessment to maximize student learning

Policy: The faculty of Bear Creek High School is committed to a differentiated curriculum by:

- Planning instruction, assignments, and assessments for various groups of students with different learning preferences, interests, and readiness levels.

- Providing multiple opportunities for re-learning, re-teaching, and re-assessment.

- Accepting late work in all subject areas by all teachers. Collaborative Content Teams will determine consistent parameters for late work, such as point values and potential for alternative learning opportunities.

- Supporting student learning by being available during Access and their intervention.

- Engaging in progress monitoring during Connections and Study Halls.

Classroom Strategies / Practices:
- Create KUD's as goals not activities.
- Pre-assessments are used to indicate students' readiness for content and skill development. Used to guide instructional decisions.
- While assessing – decide how you are going to take action.
- When allowing students to re-do or complete alternative assessments, consider the following:
    o Re-dos and alternative assessments should be given at teacher discretion.
    o Students must have given a sincere effort.
    o Require parents to sign the original assignment or test.
    o Require students to submit a plan of study that will enable them to improve their performance the second time around.
    o Identify a day by which time this will be accomplished or the grade is permanent.
    o Create a calendar of completion that will help students achieve their learning goals.
    o Require students to submit the original with the redone version so their development can be tracked.
    o Teachers can give alternate versions of assessments.
    o Teachers should not allow any re-dos during the last week of the grading period.
    o Sometimes, the greater gift is to deny the option.
- Students are offered choice in content, process and product. Student choice opportunities motivate learning and helps students to create meaning.
- Tiered assignments are teacher-prescribed learning activities that are specifically designed to respond to differences in readiness, interests, or learning preferences. They are designed by the teacher to respond to specific learning needs of students and are used for specific purposes.
- Flexible instructional groups are the types of groups used to manage tiered assignments. These groups are purposeful, not random, groupings of students based on likenesses rather than differences.

"The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is developing the ability of school personnel to function as professional learning communities."

– Rick DuFour

5. Teachers working together to create common learning experiences and grading practices in Collaborative Content Teams.

Policy: The faculty at Bear Creek High School is committed to moving forward and creating consistency through collaboration by:

- Reaching consensus regarding essential learnings, instruction, grading practices, and common assessments.

- Implementing consensus decisions in the classroom and in assessment practices in order to create fair learning opportunities for ALL students.

- Examining and implementing current research to increase student achievement.

Classroom Strategies / Practices:
- Norming of common assessments
- Establishing KUDs
- Common assessments
- Common rubrics
- Developing instruction including differentiation

"Hard, persistent and focused work is responsible for greatness, rather than innate ability. Deliberate practice can make or break the success of an individual over time."

- Shenk

6. Students engaging in the learning process to develop, maintain, and enhance proficiency

Policy: The students of Bear Creek High School engage in the learning process by:
- Attending classes and participate in the learning process.

- Self-assessing understanding and achievement of standards and learning.

- Independently monitoring progress.

- Developing metacognitive skills and adjusting approaches to learning.

- Developing communication and social skills and to providing appropriate feedback to others.

Classroom Strategies / Practices:
- Marks and feedback are used rather than grades (i.e. check, check plus….)
- Share learning goals with students from the beginning.
- Provide opportunities for students for self- and peer assessment.
- Take off only a few points for late work
- Teachers assign Student Support Programs to provide additional learning experiences as needed.
- Reduce the possible feedback on learning experiences to 100%, incomplete, or missing.

"RtI is a teaching and learning process using research-based instructional practices that reflect learner's needs, monitor student learning progress, and modify and adjust instruction as necessary to ensure continued growth."

-Diane Heacox

7. Students taking responsibility for their learning and utilizing the student support programs to ensure academic success.

Policy: The students of Bear Creek High School are responsible for their learning by:

- Utilizing study halls, tutor rooms, and access to further content learning, develop mastery, and seek additional help.

- Using Parent Portal to self-monitor achievement.

- Accessing teacher websites to obtain information about missed work, to learn about enrichment opportunities, and to assist in planning.

Classroom Strategies / Practices:

- Student Support Programs are used for additional instruction to support student re-learning needs.
- Collaborative Content teams develop support for tutor room re-teaching opportunities.
- Use comments section in the grade book to communicate with students and parents.
- Teaching students how to discuss grades with teachers – using Parent Portal – websites – study halls.

Practices to Avoid

- Penalizing student's multiple attempts at mastery.

- Grading practice (not daily homework) as students come to know concepts (Feedback, not grading, is needed).

- Withholding assistance (not scaffolding or differentiating) in the learning when it's needed.
- Assign group grades without individually assessing student skills and standards.

- Incorporating non-academic factors in proficiency grades (unless it is a part of the content standards/performance assessments).

- Grading should not be used to motivate, reward, punish or sort.

- Using A, B, C, D scale on formative assignments – use feedback.

- Grading on a curve (instead use a rubric).

- Giving points for right/wrong answers on formative assessments – give completion points for going through the learning process and give 'dollops of feedback'.

- Grading for effort.

Research

- The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is developing the ability of school personnel to function as professional learning communities (DuFour). As a school that operates as a Professional Learning Community we ask what will our students learn, how will we know when they have learned it, and what are we going to do if they don't? (DuFour)

- Students come to us with differences in background knowledge with different learning rates and different learning styles (Quinn). Differentiating instruction is doing what's fair for students. It's a collection of best practices strategically employed to maximize student's learning. . . It's highly effective teaching (Wormeli). Choice provides students the opportunity and power to act on their interests; and the key to motivation is interest (Heacox).

- Posted learning goals increase student achievement. (Wiggins & McTighe)

- Feedback about the effort has three elements: recognition of the desired goal, evidence about the present position, and some understanding of a way to close the gap between the two (Wormeli).

- Students have mastered content when they demonstrate a thorough understanding and use it purposefully in new situations (Wormeli).

- The primary goal of grading should be to accurately report to parents and student's achievement of learning goals, learning progress, and the work habits, attitudes, and behavior exhibited in the classroom (Heacox). Grades reference summative assessments only not formative experiences (Wormeli 124).

- Pyramid of Interventions provides structures that prevent students from failing. (DuFour) RtI is a teaching and learning process using research-based instructional practices that reflect learner's needs, monitor student learning progress, and modify and adjust instruction as necessary to ensure continued growth (Heacox).

- 74% of students at BCHS feel they have the support they need to be successful academically. (BCHS Make your voice heard survey)

June 2, 2010

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Talking points

- **Teachers need to educate students and parents**
- **ALP, ESS, ILP, ELL – all have different proficiency standards and teachers should accommodate all.**
- **Teachers need to be educated on Formative and Summative …. And differentiating grading.**
- **Look at an English Dept example**
- **Either use a 5 point scale or a 50 out of 100 scale**
- **Staff agreement on grading scale – whether it is a 5 point scale vs 4 point scale – eliminating the 100 point scale.**
- **Remove the 0 for the missing assignment in IC. It needs to just identify – missing. Flags don't give grades – just information.**
- **Staff agreement on rounding of grades – what should we do?**
- **Staff discussion on standardizing the gradebook – updating the gradebooks.**
- **Abbreviations need to be standard across the board.**
- **Possible revisions to document will begin in January of 2011.**
- **Teaching and helping all teachers use websites.**