Final Action Plan

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Introduction

The Standard-based grading for Mastery System, developed within Pecan Hill ISD (pseudonym) and currently being piloted at Northern Mockingbird High School (pseudonym), hopes to inspire a new system of grading that fosters achievement, increases collaboration and engagement, and eliminates punitive grading. In a study done on student perception of engagement and follow-through via the system, however, students have responded that they overwhelmingly feel that the system promotes procrastination, does not provide enough opportunity for reward for effort, and that it is not preparing them for college. In remedying these problems three objectives have been created as part of an action plan: (1) Provide more opportunities to demonstrate diverse kinds of graded work that influence connection and engagement, (2) Integrate lesson plans that align with collegiate standards and increase goal-setting, (3) Train teachers to set distinct guidelines and deadlines for completion of work with incentives. Table 1 provides the outline for the action plan proposed in reaching these objectives. For an outline of the Standards-based grading for mastery system concept, see Appendix A.

Table 1

Outline of Action Plan

Objectives and Outcomes (What)	Tasks (How)	Person(s) (Who)	Time (When)	Location (Where)	Resources	Funds
Objective #1: Provide more opportunities to demonstrate diverse kinds of graded work that influence connection and	a) Create "Daily" grades in the grade book that are weighted as a minor grade or below. *Daily grades can serve as in-class activities and/or participation*	Administrators Teachers Students	Start at the beginning of the school year: 08/2023 End of the school year (with the expectation to	On-camp us (NMHS)	Lesson plans Teacher grade book IBL and PBL training resources	Cost of materials (I.e Paper resources, supplies, etc.)

engagement	b) Create Project grades in the grade book that are weighted as a minor grade with an opportunity for feedback and corrections to earn points back c) Allow for student choice in the creation of assignments d) Train teachers on concepts of Inquiry and Project-based learning systems e) Incporpoate Inquiry and Project-based structures into lesson plans		be carried on in following years): 05/2024			
Objective #2: Integrate lesson plans that align with collegiate standards and increase goal-setting	a) Research current best practices at the collegiate level b) Differentiate instruction with independent work activities and class/group discussions c) Create opportunities for inquiry-based learning and project-based learning with teacher facilitation d) Train teachers on aligning lesson plans to purposefully model goal-setting e) Provide the opportunity for students to demonstrate summative work illustrating their	Administrators Teachers	Summer 2023 End of the school year (with the expectation to be carried on in following years): 05/2024	On-camp us (NMHS) Off-camp us for collegiate best practices research	Lesson plans Higher Education journals Training materials: creation of materials to train teachers (I.e flyers, instructional reading content, providing of internet materials, creation of powerpoints , examples, etc.)	Cost of materials (I.e Paper resources ,supplies, etc.)

	understanding at end of each 6-week grading period					
Objective #3: Train teachers on setting guidelines and deadlines for the completion of work.	a) Create teacher training seminars that model best practices in SBG and demonstrate clear guidelines and standards. b) Alter late grade policy to reflect incentives when turning work in on time (I.e full credit for on-time, lesser future activities, etc.) c) Clearly define guidelines of expectations d) Clearly define deadlines.	Administrators Teachers	At beginning of teacher back-to-school work week: 07/2023 End of the school year (with the expectation to be carried on in following years): 05/2024	On-campus (NMHS)	Training materials: the creation of materials to train teachers (I.e flyers, instructional reading content, providing of internet materials, creation of powerpoints, examples, etc.)	Cost of materials (I.e Paper resources, supplies, etc.),

Part 1: Framework for Action Plan

As of current, NMHS struggles to achieve its goals of meeting all student needs with its grading policy, as this phenomenon concerning lack of engagement and follow-through is reported by teachers to be taking place most aggressively within student groups that require more structure, support, and assistance. Students within these groups are being reported by NMHS teachers to struggle with maintaining focus and/or engaging in classroom learning and discussion, turning in assignments on time, if at all, showing up for class, and studying for assessments. Students have similarly reported that they feel the system does not allow them fair and diverse opportunities to demonstrate their work on graded assignments, that it is not preparing them for life after high school, and that it is promoting procrastination.

Remedying these problems is crucial for student success not only for achievement in high school but in their adult lives after graduation. I have created the above action plan that aims to create better support and motivators for students that are being negatively impacted by the downfalls and gaps in this system and one that teaches and models better strategies for engagement and accountability. Creating this Action Plan is necessary to address the above issues, as there are deficiencies in knowledge and understanding of the potential long-term outcomes of the grading policy. Reaching proficient levels regarding skills in engagement and accountability/follow-through across all student groups is necessary if they are going to succeed in higher education institutions and/or the adult workforce. The purpose of the Action Plan is to improve upon the policy so that there are no gaps in behavior development that may negatively impact future learning and success and provides more opportunity for students to feel supported.

Description of Stakeholders' Engagement in the Action Plan

The internal stakeholders who I will engage with in the Action Plan include PHISD and NMHS Administrators, NMHS Teachers, and NMHS Students. PHISD and NMHS Administrators will include the members of the Research Review Board, the Managing Director of Assessment and Accountability, the NMHS Principal, the NMHS Associate Principal, all NMHS Assistant Principals, NMHS Teachers, and NMHS students. External stakeholders include student parents. All internal stakeholders will take part in creating and collaborating on the Action Plan as well as implementing it. All stakeholders will also have access to anonymized data, data analysis, findings, and conclusions upon request. For a plan regarding stakeholder communication see Appendix B.

Part 2: Resource Development

Resources pointed to the role that time management seems to play in the effect of standards-based grading, as students in SBG classes reported that it was easier to procrastinate and fall behind due to the leniency of the system (Mckell & Danowitz, 2020). SBG systems intentionally lack hard-set deadlines to be more student-led and provide more opportunities for student choice. Opponents of SBG argue that due to this lack of structure however students do worse regarding content learning gain because of last-minute studying and rushing to meet deadlines that had been put off till the last minute (Mckell & Danowitz, 2020). For standards-based grading to work, it must be done with goal-setting strategies strictly enforced (Pike, 1973). The concept of goal-setting will thus be added to the action plan with the purpose of encouraging them to set academic goals for themselves and will in turn be obliged to take pride in their work and produce a quality demonstration of success. Quality matters in academic achievement, and measuring the quality of one's progress is a necessary skill (Scriffiny, 2008). In setting goals, proponents argue that students will then not only grow in their academic accomplishments but in their adult development as the goals students bring to the classroom have a strong influence on their personal motivation (Moreno, 2010). Providing these strict standards such as goal-setting structures must be set and maintained via the action plan and compliance demanded from each student according to their ability to perform for SBG systems to succeed (Pike, 1973).

Role of Teacher Support Systems in Standards-Based Grading

Teacher support in student progression through standards-based grading can be complicated as the literature argues that student success via SBG systems is directly connected to the teacher's ability to follow and implement the system. SBG can be tricky for teachers to navigate, however, as student progress is measured through the actual work that students

complete in mastering sets of designated content objectives and the purpose of the system is to help learners function independently of the teacher (Knowles, et al., 2015). The system seeks to limit the teacher's role, while also placing heavy emphasis on how the teacher works with the system. Teachers and administrators hold the key to success in standards-based grading and when teachers do not comply or lack the knowledge and skills to successfully utilize the system, student achievement can suffer (Townsley & Buckmiller, 2020). For standards-based grading to be truly effective in practice teachers must be committed to the implementation of the policies, the system must have meaning, and multiple opportunities must be made available for students to take advantage of (Townsley, 2019). Furthermore, communication is key to establishing timely feedback loops and teachers must be ready to compromise, give grace, and establish both tight and loose structures when concerning grade books, rubrics, and grading guidelines (Townsley & Buckmiller, 2020). These arguments are key factors in the development and enactment of the action plan.

Alternative Strategies in Standards-based Practice

The standards-based grading policy was adopted in place of points-based grading as a tool to better assess student needs by focusing on larger outcomes (Iamarino, 2014). Standards-based grading systems further rely on the idea that students naturally can take initiative in their learning, and when presented with an agency in their learning, SBG assumes that students will respond with high levels of engagement in their success. The Self-directed learning (SDL) system likewise, is an educational concept that assumes similar behavior from students. SDL consists of teaching students how to take initiative in their understanding, analyzing, and identifying their individual learning needs. It encompasses goal-setting, problem-solving, resource location, and visualizing potential outcomes in their growth and

learning progression. SDL base components serve as methods of action in improving upon the SBG system.

Systems such as Inquiry-based learning and Project-based learning were further analyzed as part of the creation of the action plan to aid in the success of standards-based learning. Inquiry-based learning occurs through the asking of questions rather than the static absorption of static knowledge (Rockenbach, 2011). This method places the student at the center of learning and the teacher as the guide through the process. Furthermore, it assigns meaningful roles for students within their research and inquiry process, allowing them to feel a sense of responsibility in their learning (Rockenbach, 2011).

Project-based learning further connects to the above system and it organizes learning around the creation of a presentation or product that is then presented to an audience. These projects and products involve complex tasks that are based on challenging questions or problems that involve student design, problem-solving, decision-making, or investigative activities, and that gives students relative autonomy (Friesen & Scott, 2013). In creating a plan that expands standards-based grading away from traditional points-based grading for mastery, and includes methods that foster inquiry and autonomy, students may feel more engaged and motivated to follow through on completing their work. Both methods will be suggested as per the action plan in addition to the standards-based program.

Part 3: Scholar-Practitioner Identity

As I have progressed in my research and in the creation of my action plan, I have been able to better define my scholar-practitioner identity and understand where I want to further engage my interests. I am passionate about public education and the policies and systems that shape it and am intrigued by non-traditional grading concepts such as standards-based grading. I

want to understand better the future of education and how I can assist in developing the most innovative, equitable, and productive teaching practices. My intended audience for my research, organizations, journals, and publications relevant to my topic, and my goals in further developing my scholar-practitioner identity are discussed below.

Audience

The direct audience that my current research stands to benefit includes the students, teachers, and administrators at my current place of employment as they are the primary stakeholders regarding the outcomes of my findings. I plan to engage with this audience first in the implementation of my action plan. My district and neighboring districts are also my audiences as my goal is to make a much broader impact with my research, one farther-reaching than just at my school. I hope that my research will be shared with these groups as I proceed with it. Lastly, organizations that practice SBG and organizations that are interested in it and systems like it can also serve as audiences for my research, as well as the larger education community. My research can be applied to any organization that features learning systems such as the K-12 public and private education sectors, higher education institutions, and adult education.

Organizations of Relevance

All educational institutions could potentially find relevance regarding my research due to its curriculum and assessment-based nature. The following organizations are areas of particular interest to me pertaining to how they connect to education, research, and my study.

American Educational Research Association (AERA)

As this organization represents education researchers nationally and internationally, I hope that my research and action plan will be applicable to their exploration and discussion of educational practices.

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)

This organization is a global professional community that is dedicated to developing excellence in learning, teaching, and leading and relates to my research as I am further hoping to better develop best educational practices.

The National Student Clearinghouse

This organization offers innovative solutions designed to meet the needs of organizations and communities working in or supporting the education industry and connects to my action plan as I am trying to bring innovation to the components of standards-based grading.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA)

This organization is the commissioner of primary and secondary education in the state of Texas. This is applicable to me as a researcher and teacher in Texas education and my current study focuses on a North Texas school.

Journals and Publications

In distributing my research, action plan, and future studies regarding learning systems in education, I can utilize a variety of journals and publications. Below I have listed three journals of primary interest:

Journal of School Administration Research and Development

This journal publishes research and commentary on a wide range of K-12 educational topics regarding leadership and school development.

Innovative Higher Education

This journal features research on current innovations and ideas with relevance for action in higher education institutions including innovations at the organization and policy level as well as innovations that improve diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Current Issues in Education

This journal provides research and commentary that is peer-reviewed and open-access and covers all aspects of education.

Future Contributions

After the conclusion of my current study and implementation of my action plan, I want to continue to research and study policies and systems within education. I want to continue to understand assessment systems like SBG and how they are influencing and/or fostering equity within education and how potentially better systems can be derived. I am interested in systems such as Inquiry-based learning and Project-based learning, and how those further are bridging the gaps in equitable learning. Lastly, I want to do research more on how these non-traditional systems are impacting students at a greater, future level, such as in their lives after they leave the classroom. My future interests are all guided around how to produce the most inclusive and supportive systems in education, while also developing student minds that are better fit for the rapidly changing and innovative world.

Scholar-Practitioner Identity

I understand my scholar-practitioner identity as being phenomenologically rooted. I seek to gather the data and then utilize them as direct representations of the feelings and emotions of participants in order to determine what is working and what is not. I am further defined as both researcher and participant via the action-based nature of my work as I want to collect data to identify where areas of my teaching practices are lacking and how I can improve upon them, and then use them to expand on practices of the greater community. My scholar-practitioner identity is highly rooted in understanding my place within action research and how environments and situations can influence outcomes. I am highly connected to the systems that I am studying, as I have been in the classroom watching them in action. I see how students react to them, and how their behaviors form via them, and I am incredibly invested in student success. In sum, my scholar-practitioner identity can be defined by the experiences of my students; I am conducting the research in order to make the practice the best possible and enacting the action plan, to improve on already determine practices.

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Appendix A.

Inputs	Outputs		Outcomes -- Impact		
	Activities	**Participation**	**Short**	**Medium**	**Long**
Time spent altering curriculum to fit SBG concepts (new lesson plans, new test banks, revising state standards, creation of new grade books) Time spent training teachers of SBG concepts Time spent teaching via standards-based strategies Time and Resources for Parent and Student Education on new SBG policies Time spent on district Education (creating program, auditing current and past programs) Data collection (student work, what is working, what is not, teacher feedback)	Actions we do Restructure lesson plan Restructure grading scale and reporting system Create training protocol and platform to educate staff, parents, and students on new grading model Create school and district policies regarding key components of SBG (reassessment, retest, testing, retesting, progress grades, waterfall, late work, etc.) Training sessions Classroom work time (teachers and students) District staffings	People we reach District employees Administrators Teachers Students Student Parents	**Changes in policy & procedure** All stakeholders understand key components to the system Stakeholders can implement components and policy in practice All policies have been changed in accordance with SBG system requirements Stakeholders understand desired/intended outcome and purpose of the SBG system	**Changes in staff, teacher, and student behavior** Teachers design and implement educational practices and strategies to align with SBG components Teachers and Staff are engaged Teachers and staff provide opportunities for students to engage in SBG strategies Students are engaged in SBG practices and in classroom structure/ learning Students can successful advocate for themselves regarding their needs utilizing SBG resources	**Changes in student engagement and overall academic achievement** Student engagement in classroom learning and routines increases Students ability to advocate for themselves increases regarding academic needs increases Student academic abilities increase as reflected by grading data

Assumptions	External Factors
Students will see increased GPA, content mastery, and self-accountability/adovcacy Teachers workload will start off high but will reduce over time as student accountability improves	Level of parents understanding and support Student natural ability, accountability, maturity, follow-through.

Appendix B.

Stakeholder	Topic/Issue/Idea *What do you want to communicate?*	Approach *What is the best approach given stakeholder interests & power?*	Format *What type of format will work best for the stakeholder?*	Communication Tool *What is the best means through which to communicate?*	Frequency *When and how often will you communicate?*
Admin	How levels of student engagement is increasing (or not) per SBG policy	District board meetings, admin meetings	Reports that include data by graph and example responses	Data via graphs, charts, infographics + in-person/zoom discussions	Quarterly/Once a semester/as needed
Teachers	How levels of student engagement are increasing (or not) per SBG policy implementation in the classroom? What classroom practices are impacting students per SBG and how?	District board meetings, admin meetings, staffing	Reports that include data by graph and example responses. Who staff and department meetings	Data via graphs, charts, infographics + in-person/zoom discussions. Powerpoint presentations na handouts.	Quarterly/As needed
Students	What have students reported as working or not working in terms of engagement per SBG policy?	In-class & social media (twitter)	Teacher -lead presentations and twitter reports of student data responses	Powerpoint, verbally, twitter	End of each semester
Parents	What have students reported as working or not working in terms of engagement per SBG policy?	News letters, social media (twitter, community forums)	Snippets of summary of data, graphs	News reports, social media postings	End of each semester