



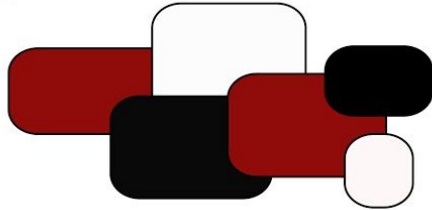
# PROFICIENCY BASED LEARNING

At  
Killingly Intermediate School



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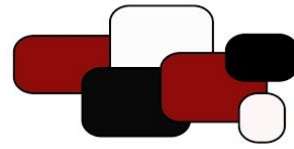
## What is proficiency-based learning?

Proficiency-based learning refers to systems of instruction, assessment grading, and academic reporting that are based on students demonstrating that they have learned the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn as they progress through their education. Proficiency-based learning systems use adopted state learning standards to determine academic expectations and define “proficiency” in a given course, subject area, or grade level. The goal of proficiency-based learning is to ensure that students are acquiring the knowledge and skills that are essential for success in school, college, career, and life.

Proficiency-based learning systems more accurately reflect and communicate a student’s learning progress and achievement, including situations in which students struggled early on in the school year, but then put in the effort and hard work needed to meet expected standards. We have all experienced failures and recognize that learning to overcome them are some of the most important lessons we can learn in life.

In many traditional grading systems, behaviors such as class participation and homework completion are factored into final grades along with scores on projects and tests. While we know that class participation, effort, and time management are essential to success, averaging together behaviors with a student’s acquired knowledge and skills can confuse our understanding of a student’s progress and achievement. This makes providing appropriate support for struggling students more challenging as we might find ourselves asking: Has the student failed to master essential concepts, or did the student fail to turn in an assignment on time?

Proficiency-based learning systems are designed to identify specific academic needs, which we can use to inform our instruction, interventions, and curriculum. That is why we assess and report Habits of Work, including perseverance, organization, and collaboration, separately from academic achievement.



## **Killingly Intermediate School's Grading Beliefs and Practices**

**Belief 1:** All students learn best when they feel included, respected, and valued by their learning community.

***Practices at KIS that support this belief:***

- Students are known as individuals and learners, and they are supported in developing positive relationships with each other and with adults in the learning community.
- We strive to create a learning environment and develop programming to reflect and honor student identities and interests.

**Belief 2:** All students learn best when they are challenged and supported with consistent high expectations.

***Practices at KIS that support this belief:***

- Establish clear, agreed-upon learning outcomes for every course and grade level.
- Common success criteria for meeting all learning outcomes is defined for every course and grade level.
- Learning outcomes, including long-term performance indicators, short-term learning targets, and habits of work are clearly articulated to students.
- Curriculum is designed to engage all students in critical thinking and the application of skills and knowledge throughout the learning process within and across content areas.
- Interventions and opportunities to revise and relearn are systemic and provided regularly to support all students in achieving common learning outcomes.

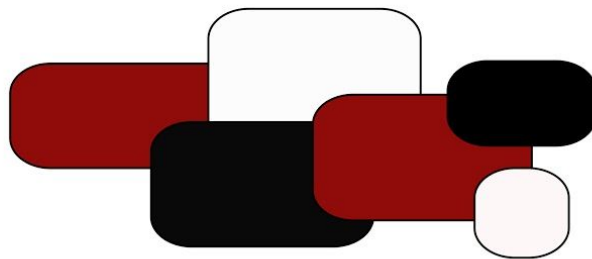


**Belief 3:**

**All students learn best when they are supported by clear cycles of practice, feedback, assessment, and reflection.**

***Practices at KIS that support this belief:***

- All forms of assessment are aligned to a common set of performance indicators.
- Habits of work are assessed and reported separately from academic progress.
- Formative assessment provides opportunities for students to practice, receive feedback, and reflect on progress.
- Summative assessments, evaluated against common scoring criteria, are used to evaluate a student's level of achievement on performance indicators at a given point in time.
- Grades are intended to be used solely to communicate a student's current level of achievement, not for motivation or punishment.
- Students regularly reflect on their learning progress and are taught to evaluate and use feedback.







## How is student progress assessed?

### Types of Assessment:

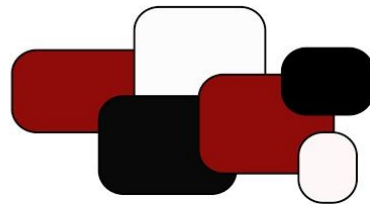
#### **Formative Assessment**

Formative assessments are used to monitor progress of student learning throughout an instructional unit.

Formative assessment is used to provide ongoing feedback and determine target areas that need support. Formative assessments are considered practice and therefore do not contribute to a student's overall score on performance indicators.

#### **Summative Assessment**

Summative assessments are used to evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional unit. A student's score on performance indicators are a reflection of their performance on summative assessments.





## **How is our Proficiency-Based Learning Framework Organized?**

### **Habits of Work**

One of the most important practices for improving instructional effectiveness and student learning is assessing and reporting academic achievement separately from work habits, character traits, and behaviors such as attendance, class participation, and turning work in on time. Killingly Intermediate School has chosen the most essential Habits of Work to report separately from academic proficiency to ensure that a student's reported academic achievement is not artificially inflated or deflated by work habits.

### **Proficiency Statements**

Students demonstrate achievement of content-area content proficiencies through their aggregate performance on summative assessments over time.

### **Performance Indicators**

Summative assessments are used to evaluate the achievement of performance indicators.

### **Learning Targets**

Learning targets guide the design of curriculum units and individual lesson plans that move students toward proficiency and the achievement of performance indicators.

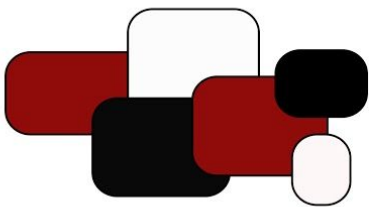


## **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF REPORT CARDS?**

The primary purpose of report cards are to clearly, accurately, consistently, and fairly communicate academic achievement and habits of work to students and families.

Proficiency-based report cards are aligned to the most important instructional standards across grade levels and content areas.

A proficiency-based report card provides detailed information on how well your child is progressing towards mastery of year-end performance indicators.





## How are report card scores calculated?

Performance indicators are fairly easy to communicate because they offer a clear, measurable point of knowledge, skill or habit of work. A student's growth toward proficiency is important to communicate as well. In order to achieve scores that represent the current level of proficiency, while also communicating the growth required for a student to achieve proficiency, we use a formula called Decaying Average.

Decaying average is a formula that gives greater weight to the most recent scores, recognizing students for how much growth they've made, without punishing them for where they started. Decaying Average uses a straightforward formula to calculate a student's level of mastery using a weighted average. When calculating grades, each new score is given a higher weight than the previous scores' weighted average. A typical equation for decaying average using a 65% weight looks like this:

**SCORE**  
**1:2**

**SCORE 2: 3**  
**GRADE CALCULATION:**  
 $(2 * .35) + (3 * .65) = 2.65$

If a student completes a third assignment. Then, the equation takes the previous average and adds the weighted new score like so:

**SCORE 3: 3**  
**GRADE CALCULATION:**  
 $(2.65 * .35) + (3 * .65) = 2.88$

The decision to use Decaying Average assumes students' abilities will increase with practice, and errors will decrease with instruction and support. The calculation focuses on representing the growth occurring, which lends a good balance to proficiency and growth in grading.





## Academic Achievement Grading Scale

### Why do we report using a 3-point scale?

Traditional grading systems that attempt to identify 100 distinct levels of performance distort the precision, objectivity, and reliability of grades.

Limiting the number of score categories to three levels through an integer grading system allows educators to offer more sensible and reliable evaluations of students' performance.

Combining the score with proficiency level descriptions further enhances its value.



**3**

#### **PROFICIENT**

THE STUDENT INDEPENDENTLY AND CONSISTENTLY UNDERSTANDS AND DEMONSTRATES KNOWLEDGE OF KEY CONCEPTS, PROCESSES AND SKILLS TO MEET GRADE LEVEL CONTENT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS.

**2**

#### **PROGRESSING**

THE STUDENT IS BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND AND APPLY KEY CONCEPTS, PROCESSES AND SKILLS.  
THE STUDENT IS PROGRESSING TOWARD GRADE LEVEL CONTENT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS, BUT MORE PRACTICE IS NEEDED.

**1**

#### **EMERGING**

THE STUDENT DOES NOT YET UNDERSTAND KEY CONCEPTS, PROCESSES AND SKILLS NECESSARY TO MEET GRADE LEVEL CONTENT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS. THIS IS AN AREA OF CONCERN.

**N**

#### **NO EVIDENCE**

THE STUDENT HAS NOT SUBMITTED ADEQUATE EVIDENCE FOR THE GRADE LEVEL CONTENT PERFORMANCE INDICATOR TO BE ASSESSED.



## Letter Grade Conversion

While our three-level grading system fully communicates student progress, we understand that students and families are familiar and comfortable with traditional letter grades.

Therefore, we are continuing to convert our numerical scores to the following letter grades.

Letter Grade Conversion Scale	
A+	3
A	2.9
A-	2.8
B+	2.7
B	2.5 - 2.6
B-	2.3 - 2.4
C+	2.1 - 2.2
C	1.9 - 2
C-	1.6 - 1.8
D	1.4 - 1.5
F	1 - 1.3

Letter scores  
are rounded  
to the nearest  
10th



## HABITS OF WORK GRADING SCALE

### PERSEVERANCE: STUDENTS WILL PERSEVERE THROUGH THE LEARNING PROCESS.

	<b>EMERGING 1</b>	<b>PROGRESSING 2</b>	<b>PROFICIENT 3</b>
<b>COMPLETING TASKS</b>	I rarely complete assignments to demonstrate evidence of my learning.	I sometimes complete assignments to demonstrate evidence of my learning.	I consistently complete assignments to demonstrate evidence of my learning.
<b>USING RESOURCES</b>	I rarely use resources to support my learning.	I occasionally use appropriate resources to support my learning.	I consistently use appropriate resources to support my learning.

### ORGANIZATION: STUDENTS WILL ORGANIZE THEIR TIME AND MATERIALS.

	<b>EMERGING 1</b>	<b>PROGRESSING 2</b>	<b>PROFICIENT 3</b>
<b>MANAGING TIME</b>	I engage in learning with consistent prompting from my teacher.	I engage in learning with regular prompting from my teacher.	I immediately engage in learning with little to no prompting from my teacher.
<b>COMING PREPARED</b>	I am rarely prepared with materials for learning.	I am sometimes prepared with materials for learning.	I am consistently prepared with all necessary materials for learning.

### COLLABORATION: STUDENTS WILL WORK EFFECTIVELY WITHIN GROUPS, OF ANY SIZE.

	<b>EMERGING 1</b>	<b>PROGRESSING 2</b>	<b>PROFICIENT 3</b>
<b>PARTICIPATING</b>	I participate with consistent support from my teacher.	I build on and/or challenge the ideas of others with encouragement from my teacher.	I consistently and appropriately build on and/or challenge the ideas of others.
<b>WORKING WITH GROUP MEMBERS</b>	I work with other students, with consistent facilitation from my teacher.	I work with students, and respect our differences, with occasional facilitation from my teacher.	I work effectively with all students and respect our differences, in all settings.



## STUDENT SUPPORT

If students fail to meet expected learning standards, we have a number of supports in place to help students as they work towards achieving proficiency.

At Killingly Intermediate School, all students have time in their daily schedule to receive extra help in a particular class or to explore enrichment opportunities. Teachers and students coordinate how to best utilize this time based on the student's needs.

## SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH BASED INTERVENTION (SRBI) AND RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION (RTI)

Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) emphasize successful instruction for all students through high-quality core general education practices, as well as targeted interventions for students experiencing learning, social-emotional or behavioral difficulties.

### **TIER 1 INSTRUCTION**

general takes place in the classroom and is offered to all students at the same time.

### **TIER 2 INSTRUCTION**

is offered when it becomes evident that a student needs additional or supplemental support in order to achieve proficiency in a particular subject area. When areas of need or weakness in a subject area have been identified, Tier 2 instruction helps students address those needs as they advance towards proficiency.

### **TIER 3 INSTRUCTION**

is offered to students who require more individualized attention and support as they work towards achieving proficiency. For some students, Tier 3 instruction occurs in place of Tiers 1 and 2.

### **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS IN A PBL MODEL...**

Habits of Work (HOW) Honor Rolls and HOW-informed are considered to determine eligibility for athletics and extracurricular activities. At Killingly Intermediate School, we are committed to creating a culture where learners value Habits of Work as much as academic achievement. HOW are reported separately on our progress reports and report cards and also determine whether students can access re-dos and re-takes to demonstrate growth on assessments.





## SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

As we make the transition to a proficiency based learning system, it will take more than just the work of our students and teachers.  
In fact it's a student/teacher/family/community partnership, and only by working together will we graduate students who are well-prepared for college and careers.

### **FAMILIES CAN HELP US ACCOMPLISH THIS BY:**

- Asking your child questions about their learning.
- Helping your child set learning goals that are connected to their interests and strengths, while remaining mindful of and attentive to areas in which they need extra help.
- Staying informed on what is going on in your child's classroom by reading newsletters and blogs and asking questions.
- Participating in school events.
- Understanding the types of assessments your child is given and how these are used to measure progress.
- Understanding how teachers use assessment data to plan and develop a learning path for your child.
- Encouraging your child to communicate their hopes and dreams with their teachers.
- Understanding that all children have different interests in different subjects, and that their progress towards proficiency in the various performance indicators will be impacted by those interests. •

### **ROUTINELY ASK YOUR CHILDREN:**

- What are you working on in class?
- Which performance indicators and/or Habits of Work are connected to what you are learning?
- How do you know if your work is "proficient" and, if it isn't proficient, how do you know where you are in terms of becoming proficient?
- What have you learned so far, and what do you need to learn next?
- What can I do to support what you're learning at school?



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Proficient** means that a student has demonstrated competence in (or, mastery of) a body of knowledge and/or set of skills related to identified standards.

**Proficiency-Based Learning (PBL)** is an approach to academic instruction, assessment, and reporting that is based on students being able to demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge, skills, and abilities they are expected to learn-at their grade level-before advancing to the next level, graduation, or the next step in their learning journey.

**Standards** identify the essential knowledge, skills, and behaviors that should be taught and learned in school at each grade level, and are aligned with Learning Outcomes in the areas of Core Knowledge and Transferable Skills. (See page 5 for WCSU's Student Learning Outcomes).

**Performance Indicators** are a more detailed articulation of what students should know or be able to do at a grade level or in a course. They are measurable, and allow students to demonstrate progress towards proficiency over time. They are also used to determine whether a student is meeting or exceeding course expectations, or needs additional assistance.

**Proficiency-Based Reporting** is designed to clearly define expectations for what will be learned, including the depth of learning necessary to demonstrate proficiency. It is also designed to indicate areas of weakness that need to be addressed; document and report learning over time; and communicate with students, parents, and guardians about how students are progressing towards proficiency.