

IMPLEMENTING STANDARDS-BASED GRADING:
ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' BELIEFS, PRACTICES AND CONCERNS

By

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

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Dissertation of CARRIE ANN ADRIAN find it satisfactory and recommend that
it be accepted.

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Abstract

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In this age of standards-based education, students are being taught the concepts and skills deemed important and necessary according to state standards. Students are being assessed on their understanding of these concepts and skills through high-stakes testing. Standards-based grading is assessing students on their understanding of these same concepts and skills in their classroom work and informing parents of students' progress through regularly published report cards.

This mixed-methods study explored the grading beliefs, practices and concerns of elementary teachers in a school district preparing to implement standards-based grading and reporting. The study also contained elements of action research as it was purposeful in planning for that specific change, and also due to the author's depth of involvement as both the researcher and elementary principal. During this study, teachers were participating in a book study in order to build a common knowledge base and common vocabulary around standards-based grading practices. The author was particularly interested in discovering teachers' concerns, in order to help identify and remove barriers to this change.

Data were collected at both the beginning and end of the book study, through surveys using forced choice and written response. The study utilizes the concurrent triangulation strategy to compare the data and interpret the findings. Collaboration, technology and support, and educating families were the themes that emerged from the data. Teachers expressed the need for ongoing collaboration with their peers in order to create and maintain consistency across the district regarding standards-based grading. They expressed the desire to have an online grade book set up with all of the standards, and the training to use the grade book efficiently. They shared their need for support in learning how to organize their materials and how to manage their time. Regarding families, teachers wanted to be certain that parents and students will understand the process of standards-based grading, so that they can participate as partners in the process.

Out of these themes, recommendations were made regarding the professional development and support needed to address the concerns of teachers and to help make the transition to standards-based grading as smooth as possible.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background

Enacted in 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act requires states to publish their achievement standards for students in the areas of Reading, Writing, and Math, and to annually report the number of students who meet those standards (Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005). Prior to NCLB, however, most U.S. states had already begun the creation of standards. This work differed from states' prior work around goals or objectives in that these standards focused on what students should know and be able to do, as opposed to what teachers felt they should teach. This was a paradigm shift for teachers. Teachers were not only required to cover the material; teachers were required to ensure that students learn what they are supposed to learn – the published standards. For example, instead of just teaching all of the lessons in the math book on addition and subtraction, teachers needed to be certain that students understood the meaning of addition and subtraction and how they relate to one another. While states have different names for them, standards define the content – what students need to know at specific grade levels, and the level of performance students should meet (O'Connor, 2002). This information about individual student performance is usually translated into grades.

Historically, the purpose of grades has been to communicate to families regarding how students are achieving (O'Connor, 2007). In a traditional system, grading is norm-referenced; that is, students' performance is compared to that of other students. In a standards-based system, grading is criterion-referenced; thus, students' performance is compared to the published standards (Guskey, 2001; McMunn, Schenck, & McColskey, 2003; O'Connor, 2007). Success is

based on students' quality performance of those set standards. Achievement is assessed at the end of a learning cycle, rather than on an accumulation of work from throughout the entire learning cycle (Stecher, Barron, Kaganoff, & Goodwin, 1999).

Overview of Study

In this age of standards-based education, students are being taught the concepts and skills deemed important and necessary according to state standards. Students are being assessed on their understanding of these concepts and skills through high-stakes testing. Therefore, one could conclude that it makes the most sense for students to also be assessed on their understanding of these same concepts and skills in their classroom work, and that through regularly published report cards, parents should be informed of students' progress toward achieving mastery of these concepts and skills. For continuity, teachers in the same grade level within a school district should report student progress using the same criteria. For many teachers, this means changing the way they record student work, the way they determine grades, and the way they report student achievement to parents.

In Franklin Pierce Schools, the elementary teachers have begun as a whole group to learn about the practices that support standards-based grading and reporting. Through a book study, they have been building a knowledge base and a common vocabulary around standards-based grading, and several teachers have begun to use some of the practices outlined in the book.

The purpose of this study was to explore the extent to which the transition to standards-based grading will require a significant change in the grading practices of Franklin Pierce Schools' elementary teachers. In order to accomplish this, it was necessary to understand teachers' current grading practices and their concerns about the upcoming transition to a new grade reporting system. Gaining an understanding of teachers' beliefs about grading has been

beneficial in determining the significance of this change in teachers' minds.

Franklin Pierce Schools is located in unincorporated Pierce County on the outskirts of Tacoma and is composed of three communities: Midland, Parkland and Summit. It is comprised of eight elementary schools, two middle schools, and three high schools, which together serve approximately 6,500 students.

In 2003, a district committee worked to create an elementary report card that addressed all of the published State Learning Goals, or standards. The charge of the committee was to create a document that would accurately describe a student's performance relative to these standards, such as "Read with comprehension, write with skill, and communicate effectively and responsibly in a variety of ways and settings." In 2006, the report card was converted to an online grading program, with the intention of allowing parents access to their children's grades at any time through the internet. The document itself was long and cumbersome, and the layout was confusing to parents. The report card had more fields for information than teachers had tools to assess, and teachers' methods for determining how students were progressing differed throughout the district. Since that time, the report card has been streamlined, but teachers still differ in their approaches to determining students' grades.

During the 2009-2010 school year, the district convened a committee to define Priority Standards at the elementary level. The committee was comprised of one representative from each elementary school, including primary teachers, intermediate teachers, and learning specialists, two district-level leaders and one elementary principal. The committee's task was to study the State Essential Learnings in Reading, Writing and Math, determine which standards were the highest priorities for each grade level, and then delineate when those should be taught during the school year. The committee shared this work with all of the elementary teachers at strategic

points in the process, to gain feedback and to foster understanding and buy-in by the large group. The end product was the Priority Standards document for each grade level, broken down by trimester, along with common summative assessments that grade-level Professional Learning Communities can choose to use to assess students' achievement of those Priority Standards.

During this 2011-2012 school year, Franklin Pierce elementary teachers have been involved in a book study on standards-based grading practices. The book study challenged teachers' thinking about their current grading practices, encouraged dialogue about the pros and cons of the information presented, and promoted changes in teachers' thinking and action regarding the grading of student work. This study focused on addressing the concerns of these elementary teachers as they began implementing standards-based grading. The research questions for this study were:

1. What are teachers' current grading practices?
2. What are teachers' general concerns about the implementation of standards-based grading?
3. What are teachers' specific concerns about the implementation of standards-based grading?
4. What do teachers' grading practices and concerns tell us about their beliefs about grading?

Methods

This research was a mixed methods study, using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The study also contained elements of action research as it was purposeful in planning for a specific change in our district, and that I have been deeply involved in the change process, both as researcher and as an elementary principal. The objective of this study was to

determine the degree to which the transition to standards-based grading will require significant changes in the grading practices of Franklin Pierce Schools' elementary teachers.

Participants were self-selected from the group of elementary teachers within the district who were participating in a book study on standards-based grading practices. Book study participants had the option to participate in the surveys or to decline; there was no penalty for those who did not wish to participate. The first part of the survey was the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (Hall & Hord, 2001), which was given at the end of the first book study session and again at the last book study session. There was an additional page of questions regarding teachers' grading practices, which was given to participants at the beginning of the book study only. Participants used identifiers known only to themselves, which linked their two surveys together.

Regarding survey reliability and validity, the Stages of Concern Questionnaire is reported to have strong reliability estimates, ranging from .65 to .86, and internal consistency ranging from .64 to .83 (Hall & Hord, 2001). This questionnaire was created to apply to all educational innovations. Those administering the survey can use it in developing concerns profiles, from which they can determine the professional development and support most needed to promote the implementation of the new initiative.

Using the concurrent triangulation strategy (Creswell, 2009), both quantitative and qualitative data were collected at the beginning and end of the book study. Data from the grading practices survey were analyzed, identifying the number and percentage of teachers who engaged in each of the practices. These data were compared with teachers' written reasons for either engaging or not engaging in each practice, checking for consistency and confirmation of teachers' reasoning.

Data from both the Stages of Concern Questionnaire were analyzed, identifying the stages of concern in which the participants began and ended during the course of the book study. These data were compared with teachers' written concerns, checking for corroboration between the two. From these data, themes emerged, which are addressed in Chapter Four.

My findings have been shared with our Teaching and Learning Department, along with recommendations regarding the district support required for the success of the implementation of standards-based grading at the elementary level.

Positionality

As an elementary principal in the district, I had a vested interest in this work. I conducted this research project as a facilitator/researcher, but my position as a principal likely remained in people's minds. I worked hard to be very clear in how I presented my intentions, and in how I talked with and included the teacher participants during this process.

Because this topic has become a passion of mine, I am highly vested in informing teachers' grading practices and in helping them think more intentionally about the processes they go through in grading student work and assigning trimester report card grades. Ultimately, I want the district to have an elementary report card that is clearly aligned with our standards, and that is also informative to students and parents. I am not highly vested in what the actual report card looks like, as long as it includes the elements indicated as important by the research.

My position as a principal conducting this research could have potentially brought up some issues. First of all, as a district-supported project, it might have been perceived that I was required to push a specific agenda through, regardless of the input of the teachers. To combat this, I clearly shared with teachers that I was passing on their questions, concerns and input to those in charge of decision-making, and that I would provide them with whatever official

information I was able to at any given time. Another potential issue may have been that due to my position, teachers may have found it difficult to give me negative feedback. To combat this, I provided many ways for teachers to give anonymous feedback. I also worked to provide a safe environment for discussion of issues.

Dissertation Format

This dissertation is organized in chapters. Chapter One is the introduction to the study. Chapter Two is a Literature Review of standards-based grading and organizational change. Chapter Three is a narrative report on the research project itself, including the grading practices and concern data obtained through the research. Chapter Four is a summary of the research project.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To shape the context for the study, this literature review will discuss research on the philosophies of grading, grading practices, and the transition from traditional to standards-based grading. The literature reviewed includes research studies and practitioner-based writing.

Since the early 1990s, Washington State has been involved in standards-based education reform. It began with the identification of Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) for the content areas of Reading, Writing, Math, Social Studies and Science. The Arts and Health and Fitness followed. With the enactment of No Child Left Behind in 2002, Washington's EALRs were revised, and over the years, Grade-Level Expectations (GLEs) have also been developed, giving more explicit guidance to educators. All states have developed standards defining what students need to know and be able to do at specific grade levels. In July, 2011, Washington adopted the Common Core State Standards, which were based on the National Common Core Standards. Full implementation of the Common Core State Standards, accompanied by a new assessment system, is set for the 2014-2015 school year.

In response to standards-based education reform, educators have recognized the need to assess students' achievement according to state standards. Standards-based assessment and grading have become a topic of discussion all over the country (Carlson, 2003; Guskey & Jung, 2006; O'Connor, 2002). Carlson (2003) discussed criterion-referenced grading (grading to standards) and the best practices related to criterion-referenced grading. Guskey and Jung (2006) reported on the challenges of creating a standards-based reporting tool, and provided recommendations for clarifying the purpose of report cards, differentiating grading criteria,

moving from letter grades to standards, and grading students with special needs. O'Connor (2002) presented grading issues, theories and guidelines for grading to standards, with the underlying belief that grades need to communicate about students' achievement in relation to the published standards.

Research has sought to explain reasons for teachers' assessment and grading practices and factors that influence those practices. In this review of literature, these findings are discussed and examples are given of assessment and grading practices and grade reporting. Carlson (2003) defines *grading practice* as the process a teacher uses to assign value to student performance on assessments, and *grade reporting* as the dissemination of that information to students and their families.

Grading Philosophies

McMillan and Nash (2000) conducted a study in Virginia on classroom teacher assessment and grading decision making. Through surveys followed by interviews, they identified six themes that explained how and why teachers use certain assessment and grading practices. Those themes were: teacher beliefs and values; classroom realities; external factors; teacher decision-making rationale; assessment practices; and grading practices (p. 9). A major theme they discovered was teacher beliefs and values about assessment and grading. They categorized five types of teacher beliefs and values: teachers' philosophies of teaching and learning; pulling for students; promoting student understanding; accommodating individual differences; and student engagement and motivation (p. 10). While teachers didn't often use the phrase "philosophy of teaching and learning," their explanations were indicative of philosophical beliefs, such as, "I weigh more on homework...there are worksheets that I use. And to me, my

philosophy of education is run by Dewey. The more you practice something the better, the more proficient you become in that skill” (p. 9).

McMillan, Myran, and Workman (2002) conducted another study in Virginia to further determine the factors elementary teachers use in grading. In their literature review they quote Cizek, Fitzgerald, Shawn, and Rachor (1995), “Many teachers seemed to have individual assessment policies that reflected their own individualistic values and beliefs about teaching” (p. 160). Their study, conducted through surveys of over 900 teacher participants, found that teachers’ grading practices were incongruent; they found that the variation of grading practices within schools was greater than the variation between schools. For example, they found that student improvement was reportedly not used at all by 13% of the teachers, but was used “quite a bit”, “extensively” or “completely” by 30% of the teacher participants. Ability level was not used by 23% of teachers, but was used “quite a bit” to “extensively” by 47% of teachers. Although the participant districts used percentage scales which corresponded to letter grades, only 65% of the teachers reported using the scales “extensively” to “completely” (p. 208).

In their 2000 study in Virginia, McMillan and Nash found that teachers see assessment and grading of students as a private matter that is not discussed much with other teachers. They stated, “Teachers adopted their own grading policy, with little regard for standardization with other teachers” (p. 32). In their Michigan study on grading practices, McNair, Bhargava, Adams, Edgerton, and Kypros (2003), found that teachers’ regular practice does not necessarily match their stated philosophies. In their interviews, teachers stated that they preferred more authentic assessments, but researchers found that they actually used more traditional assessments in practice. They reported, “It may be that few teachers possess a complete enough understanding of assessment and skills to assess students in systematic ways in their own classrooms” (p. 29).

With the move toward a more standards-based system, teachers face a re-evaluation of how they assess and grade their students.

Researchers agree that, in order to do this, teachers and school systems must first have a solid understanding of the standards students are expected to achieve. This is extremely difficult because in most states, standards are either vague, unrealistically extensive, or overly specific. Carlson (2003) defines standards as “broad statements of essential knowledge” (p.4), and states that objectives are specific goals based on standards that serve as benchmarks. O’Connor (2002) argues that states have too many standards, and advocates that school districts prioritize them so the most important standards are emphasized. Schmoker and Marzano (1999); Guskey (2001); and O’Shea (2005) all agree that standards should clearly identify what students need to know and be able to do, and that those standards must be aligned with assessments and other evidence by which teachers can judge students’ achievement of the standards. Thompson (2001) describes a standards-based approach as having teacher collaboration around a set of standards, with a results-orientation and accountability for those results. Teachers must understand what they are assessing and agree on the purpose of assessment before they can address the way they assess student learning.

Grading Practices

Thus, it is not surprising that teacher assessment and grading practices across the nation have been in a state of flux. This section discusses what research tells us about these topics, as well as what research says about teacher decision making.

In their study on teacher assessment and grading decision making, McMillan and Nash (2000) report teachers’ belief that informal, observational assessments and constructed-response assessments are best for checking for student understanding. They also report that teachers use

formative assessments and pre-assessments to inform their teaching. In their study on grading practices, McMillan et al. (2002) found that their Language Arts and Mathematics teacher participants tended to use objective assessments most frequently, followed by performance assessments and projects used by Language Arts teachers. On tests, teachers most often asked questions that measured student understanding followed by those requiring application and reasoning; few teachers used recall questions.

In her work, Carlson (2003) states that best grading practice is accomplished through authentic assessment that is directly related to learning objectives. She describes the use of portfolios, exhibitions, field projects and collaborative activities and projects as examples of authentic assessment. She also states that criterion-referenced assessment is the most widely-accepted practice by experts. Criterion-referenced assessment is assessment of student performance compared to specific criteria, or standards.

McMillan and Nash (2000) also found that teachers use a mix of assessment results combined with their beliefs and values in order to determine students' grades. They found that most teachers use four sources for grades: homework, quizzes, tests, and projects or papers. Some teachers include participation, in-class work, and effort in their calculations. In their later study, McMillan et al. (2002) replicated these findings. They report that the major sources for grades are actual student performance, effort, and ability or improvement. Other factors they found to influence teacher grading were homework, other teachers' grading practices, comparing students with other students (which is norm-referenced, not criterion-referenced), and the consideration of borderline cases. In the case of a student who was right on the edge of earning a higher letter grade (a borderline student), teachers considered the student's effort, improvement, class behavior, and other non-test information when determining the grade.

Tomlinson (2001) believes that students' work should be graded based on clearly-defined criteria for quality work. Guskey (2001) advocates differentiating grading criteria into three parts: product, process, and progress. Product is what students know and are able to do at a particular point in time. Process relates to a student's effort and behavior, and progress relates to how much students gain from their learning experiences. Teachers tend to use some combination of these, but only report them as one grade. Guskey believes they should be reported separately. O'Connor (2002) and Tomlinson (2005) agree, stating that behaviors and achievement should be reported separately so that achievement is not distorted with other factors. According to the study by Guskey and Jung (2006), parents prefer these criteria to be separate, as this conveys more detailed information and makes it easier to have focus during parent-teacher conferences. McMunn, Schenck, and McColskey (2003) state, "If the primary purpose of grades is to communicate information about student learning, then in a standards based system, grades should reflect learning standards and not other variables" (p. 6).

With regard to teacher decision-making, McMillan and Nash (2000) report in their study that it is a "highly individualized, idiosyncratic process" (p. 19). They found that no two teachers were alike, and the teachers' comments revealed the belief that they should not use the same practices as other teachers. The researchers found, however, that teachers felt a tension between their beliefs and values, their classroom realities, such as unsupportive families, poor student behavior, and absenteeism, and other external factors, such as statewide testing, district grading policies, and being able to justify grades to parents. Teachers expressed that they try to find a balance between all of these factors when making decisions about grading. McMillan et al. (2002) found that "...teachers use a wide variety of approaches to grading and that they want their grades to fairly reflect both student effort and achievement, as well as to motivate students"

(p. 204). Finding the appropriate balance is a theme in these studies. How do educators go about finding balance?

Tomlinson (2001) recommends that teachers look for growth patterns of students over time when assessing report card grades. In her practice, she shows individual student growth on a student's report card, and also shares that student's relative standing in the class. O'Connor (2002) states that when determining grades, teachers need only collect enough data to confirm previous assessments, and that grades should be based on the most consistent level of performance over a grading period, with more emphasis placed on the most recent assessments, when children have had the opportunity to demonstrate their learning.

As shared previously, Guskey (2001) promotes establishing clear indicators of product, process and progress, and reporting each of them separately on the reporting tool. According to Guskey, the challenge is developing the proper tool. He advises educators to ask three important questions when looking to develop a new reporting tool: What information do we want to communicate? Who is the primary audience for that information? How will the information be used? Jung and Guskey (2007) report, "One of the most important functions of report cards and grades is to give families information on their children's progress in school" (p. 48). Guskey and Jung (2006) caution that educators' mistake is in choosing the reporting format first, before considering its purpose.

McMunn et al. (2003) discuss that the prospect of changing to standards-based grading means changing how teachers determine and report grades. They found that "Many teachers are locked into traditional grading systems that mimic the format of the report card used in a school or district" (p. 7). They also discuss that reform in grading changes must have systemic support

regarding reporting procedures. If these aren't coordinated, teachers are forced to continue using traditional practices rather than standards-based practices.

Professional Development

Moving from a traditional grading system to a standards-based grading system requires changes in teachers' philosophies around the purpose of grading, their organization of evidence, and their calculation of grades (O'Connor, 2007). With change comes discomfort, insecurity and even panic. Even when change is needed, those most affected by the change may find it difficult to adjust. Losing that which is familiar and comfortable, and learning new procedures, processes and even technology can cause personal pain (Yukl, 2010).

Teachers need professional development in order to inform their thinking and improve or change their practice. Standards-based grading is very different from traditional grading; therefore, implementing standards-based grading requires a significant shift in teachers' thinking about education and assessment. According to Thompson (2001), "Under a system of authentic standards, the school system invests heavily in high-quality professional development for teachers and administrators in an effort to support their work in teaching to the standards" (p. 360). O'Connor recommends that once standards are in place, teachers need to have frequent opportunities to engage in dialogue together to build common understanding, and so that the standards can be applied consistently (2007). O'Shea (2005) advocates for teacher collaboration regarding lesson planning as an important part of professional development for implementing standards. He said, "Teachers need opportunities to practice new skills and methods in a sheltered or coached environment that is similar to, or actually includes, their classrooms" (p. 135). He suggests that districts use trained teacher leaders to help their colleagues with implementation.

McMunn et al. (2003) found in their Bay District, Florida study, that professional development began with volunteers, who then helped to refine and improve the district's documents and their professional development. They had 241 teachers voluntarily implement their new standards over a three-year period, and then the district set a two-year timeline for full implementation, which included assessment and grading of those standards.

In their model, Bay District developed a self-assessment for teachers to determine where they were in the implementation process, which placed them on the professional development path that would best meet their needs. In Bay District, "Quality professional development was identified as the major area of focus to address and study over time that would lead to building greater capacity to sustain the district work" (p. 9).

Research completed during the first decade of the 21st century (Guskey, 2001; McMunn, Schenck, & McColskey, 2003; O'Connor, 2007; O'Shea, 2005; Thompson, 2001) argues that implementing standards-based grading procedures across a school district requires clear, focused standards, high quality professional development regarding authentic assessment and grading practices, an appropriate reporting tool that matches the reporting purposes stated by the district, and time – both for professional learning to occur, and for modifying and improving the documents and processes. This research also suggests that parents need to be involved.

"Successfully implementing standards-based grading and reporting demands a close working relationship among teachers, parents, and school and district leaders" (Guskey, 2001, p. 27). The degree to which parents should be involved is not discussed much in the literature, and could be an area for further research.

Organizational Change

Change is not an event, but rather a process (Hall & Hord, 2001). Organizations must adapt to their changing environments in order to survive (Yukl, 2010). Organizations seek to combine those behaviors that create stability with those that search for new options. When new options are discovered, they are tried. If they succeed, they are kept; if they fail, they are eliminated (Bolman & Deal, 2003). This is the essence of organizational change, although in education, schools that fail are often not eliminated.

The goal of organizational change in schools is an increase in student learning. Change involves teachers implementing new practices in their classrooms, which in turn will impact schools, districts, and states. Educational change does not only involve teachers; it also involves leaders who serve as facilitators (Hall & Hord, 2001). According to Yukl (2010), change efforts in organizations are more likely to succeed if leaders understand the different types of change, the reasons people tend to accept or reject change, the phases in the change process, and how to effectively use a model for understanding problems in the organization.

Change initiatives in organizations are not usually centered around one sole innovation; they are equally often focused on a number of small innovations that need to occur at once (Hall & Hord, 2001). In the case of implementing standards-based grading, changes in philosophies, practices, technology, communication, and the reporting tool all require consideration and focus.

Bolman and Deal (2003) identify barriers to change as well as strategies for addressing these barriers. Anxiety, uncertainty, confusion, loss of stability, loss of power, and a need to cling to the past are some of the barriers reported. To address these barriers, Bolman and Deal recommend ongoing training, support, and a chance for workers to participate in the process.

They also encourage communication, negotiation of issues, and the development of transition rituals.

Bridges (2009) identifies three phases of transition through change. The first phase is letting go, in which leaders need to be clear with what is over and what is not over, and to help people deal with their loss. The second phase is the neutral zone, in which the old is gone but the new is not yet up and running. Leaders need to help people deal with their anxiety in this phase, and help keep workers from being overloaded. Phase three is the new beginning. Leaders can help by clarifying purpose, having a clear plan, and helping people understand how they can participate and contribute. Fullan (2008) also shares strategies for leaders of organizational change. He advises that leaders create conditions that help employees succeed, and advocates engaging co-workers in purposeful interactions and quality experiences in order to promote continuous improvement.

Participants in a change initiative go through stages of concern. The stages relate to where participants' focus lies, and range from being unrelated, or having no awareness of the initiative to concerns for self and the task, to concerns related to the impact the initiative will have on customers, co-workers, and the system itself (Hall & Hord, 2001). This study will focus on identifying elementary teachers' stages of concern during the initial implementation phase of standards-based grading. Teachers' specific concerns will also be identified, as well as their perceptions about whether or not the professional development on standards-based grading has alleviated their concerns. Findings from this study will be helpful in improving professional development opportunities to better address specific teacher concerns.

CHAPTER THREE
REPORT OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

This research project began out of my desire to learn more about effective grading practices and how I, as a principal, could support teachers in their quest to promote student learning through their practices. In reviewing the literature, I discovered studies on teachers' grading philosophies, which helped explain some of their grading practices. Further review of the literature uncovered studies on the factors teachers use when determining grades, as well as practitioner-based writing about how many nationally-known experts go about assessing student achievement and reporting it to students and their families.

Other studies I read indicated that, for districts to make significant changes in their grading practices, high-quality extensive professional development was required. This was supported by the literature on organizational change, which discussed the stages of change and how to identify and remove barriers to change. From my review of the literature, I sought to design a plan for formally initiating the transition to standards-based grading for the elementary teachers in the district.

Knowing that most of our secondary teachers had already participated in a book study on A Repair Kit for Grading: 15 Fixes for Broken Grades (O'Connor, 2007), I received district approval to design a book study for our elementary teachers using the book. One of the goals of this book study was to build a common knowledge base and common vocabulary among teachers around standards-based grading practices, as a first step in our district's transition to standards-based grading. Another outcome was to identify teachers' current grading practices as well as their concerns around the transition to standards-based grading, in order to determine the

significance of this change in teachers' minds, to help remove barriers and make this transition as smooth as possible. These last outcomes were the basis for my research study.

Collaboration with Stakeholders

I began this process by collaborating with district level leadership around the book study. Before facilitating the book study with teachers, I piloted an abbreviated version with my elementary principal colleagues, so that we would have a common knowledge base and vocabulary. They gave me the go-ahead to work with the teachers, and I began designing the agendas for the book study. Next, I collaborated with our Executive Director of Teaching and Learning, who has extensive experience with standards-based grading. She promoted the book study as one of our main professional development initiatives for the 2011-2012 school year. As I designed each book study session, I sent the agendas to her for feedback.

I facilitated the first round of the book study myself, collecting the survey data at the beginning and end of the study. I also asked for feedback on the design of the agendas, which I used to modify the agendas for the next round. The three book study groups in the second round were lead by our Executive Director of Teaching and Learning, our Curriculum Specialist, and several of our Instructional Coaches. I attended the first and last sessions of each group, in order to collect the survey data in person.

Upon completion of this study, I met with district level leadership to share my findings and recommendations. This information is being used to help design the professional development opportunities in which teachers will be able to participate during the 2012-2013 school year and beyond. This information will also help determine the system-wide supports needed by teachers in order to successfully and effectively implement standards-based grading.

Participants and Data Collection

Participants were self-selected from the group of elementary teachers within the district who were participating in a book study on standards-based grading practices. Initially, this book study was an optional professional development activity, but after the first round, district leadership determined that it should be a required activity for elementary teachers. Book study participants had the option to participate in the research surveys or to decline; there was no penalty for those who did not wish to participate.

During the first book study session, we reviewed O'Connor's overarching criteria for effective grades, which state that grades need to be consistent, accurate, meaningful, and they need to support learning (2007, p. 4) Then small groups talked about the underpinning issues of fairness, motivation, objectivity and professional judgment. Groups shared out with the larger group. At the end of the first book study session, participants were given the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (Hall & Hord, 2001), along with an additional page of questions regarding teachers' individual grading practices. Each participant used identifiers on their surveys that were known only to themselves, which linked their survey data.

In the second book study session, we reviewed the first six fixes from chapter two of our book. Teachers chose which fix they wanted to discuss. They met in small groups, and each group focused on the concerns or issues they had with that particular fix. Then they discussed how those concerns or issues could be addressed. Teachers chose a second fix to discuss, following the same protocol. At the end of the session, each small group shared out with the whole group, which led to further discussion.

During the third and fourth book study sessions, teachers had the opportunity to practice some of the fixes using their own classroom data. They were able to practice organizing a grade

book page by standards or learning goals. They were also able to practice determining grades by using measures of central tendency other than the mean, using only summative evidence, and emphasizing more recent achievement. After the practice activities, teachers participated in discussion groups, providing feedback on how we as a district could help support their work. At session three, one discussion group focused on how to provide clear descriptions of achievement expectations and the other discussion group talked about how we could help teachers compare each student's performance to set standards. At session four, one group talked about the need to rely on quality assessments and the other group shared ideas for involving students in the grading process. At the end of each session, discussion groups shared their main points with the whole group.

In organizing the data, I first scored the Stages of Concern Questionnaires according to the directions given by Hall and Hord (2001). These quantitative data resulted in a line graph for each survey, indicating the respondents' peaks and valleys – their areas of greatest and least concern. On a spreadsheet, I entered each respondent's identifier names, the two highest peaks and two lowest valleys from their line graphs, and their qualitative answers to the question, "When you think about standards-based grading, what concerns do you have?"

Hall and Hord (2001) categorized the Stages of Concern into three categories. The "Informational Stage" and "Personal Stage" relate to Self. The "Management Stage" has to do with Task. The "Consequence Stage", "Collaboration Stage", and "Refocusing Stage" address Impact. In order to have a better visual representation of which categories were of greatest and least concern to respondents, I color-coded them on the spreadsheet. Green represented Self, yellow represented Task, and red represented Impact. I sorted the data on the spreadsheet by respondents' highest peak concern.

Second, I re-read each respondent's answer regarding their concerns. I unitized and coded each answer, uncovering categories as I worked. I created a new spreadsheet in which I entered each unit of data by the respondents' identifier names, sorted by category. I set this aside for later use.

Third, I went through each respondent's answers to the survey questions on grading practices. I entered each written response on the same spreadsheet as the Stages of Concern data, enabling me to see all of the answers from each respondent in their own row of data. As this represented a vast number of pages of data, I printed the spreadsheets by book study group and assembled them on the walls of my dining room and living room for analysis.

Fourth, I analyzed the grading practices data. Some of the questions described practices that support standards-based grading, some described practices that do not support standards-based grading, and others were neutral. I began by tallying whether respondents answered "yes" or "no" to engaging in the practice in question, and calculated percentages for each. I then read through and grouped teachers' reasons for either engaging or not engaging in each practice.

Fifth, I analyzed the Stages of Concern data. I tallied each respondent's stages for their top two highest peaks and their two lowest valleys, gathering the totals for all four book study groups, and calculated percentages for each stage. I then returned to my spreadsheet of categorized written concerns to cross-check with the Stages of Concern data.

At the final book study session for each group, the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (Hall & Hord, 2001) was given again. The data were organized and analyzed in the same manner as before, and then they were compared with the pre-book study data. From these data, themes emerged, which are addressed in Chapter Four.

Analysis of Teachers' Beliefs about Grading

The goal of this study was to explore the extent to which the transition to standards-based grading will require a significant change in the grading practices of Franklin Pierce Schools' elementary teachers. To this end, it was necessary to define what a significant change might entail. Gaining an understanding of teachers' beliefs about grading was also beneficial in determining the significance of this change in teachers' minds. In the analysis of teachers' beliefs about grading, I took each question into account separately, categorizing the responses based on teachers' own words. I have reported the most common responses below along with some individual responses, to demonstrate the range of beliefs expressed by teachers.

Reason for Grading Student Work

Eighty-six teachers responded to the question, "In your professional opinion, what is the reason for grading/scoring student work?" Many of the responses included more than one reason. The most common reason, indicated by 42 teachers, is to assess whether or not the student has met standard or understood the concept or learning target. One of these teachers added that he or she grades student work to assess, "My need to re-teach or intervene." Twenty-four teachers stated that grading student work helps them evaluate student progress, and nine teachers use graded work to help them identify what students need to learn. Twenty-five teachers grade student work to guide their instruction and to determine the effectiveness of their teaching. As one of these said, grading is "To reflect learning. To be a barometer for what needs to happen next." Another of these wrote, "To see where they are at, anticipate what they need to learn and recognize my weak spots as a teacher." Twenty-five other teachers stated that they grade student work in order to give feedback to students and families regarding student learning. One teacher wrote, "It is expected by administration and parents – 'proof'."

There is relative congruence in these answers. The majority of respondents use student work to determine how students are performing relative to the standards or learning targets, and many of them stated that they use student work to inform their instruction. Many also use graded work as feedback for students and families. Taking into account these responses, it does not seem that it would be too difficult to reach consensus regarding the reasons for grading student work.

Purpose of Report Cards

Seventy-six teachers responded to the question, “In your professional opinion, what is the purpose of report cards?” Again, many of the responses included more than one purpose. The most common rationale, indicated in 79 different comments, is to share with families how students are performing or progressing in relation to the standards or learning targets. One teacher wrote, “To help parents see how their student is improving and see their strengths and weaknesses academically.” Another teacher wrote, “To inform parents of the grade level expectations, their child’s growth and what they can do to help them retain or obtain those goals.” Three respondents stated that this communication was also for future teachers, one stated that it was for the school and district, in addition to families, and one more stated that it was also “for colleges.” In ten responses, teachers shared the idea of showing what skills need improvement so that schools and families can work together to help students. One respondent said that the purpose of report cards is to, “Keep teachers accountable so the public feels like there is some transparency in education.” Two respondents stated that the intent of report cards is to record student performance and summarize their grades at the end of the trimesters, one said that it is to help teachers be intentional in their instruction and interventions, another said that it is to give students accountability, and one more said that it is to give a basis for movement

between grade levels. Regarding report cards, one teacher commented, “They have changed so much and so often I think they are worthless. There isn’t consistency even within a building.”

There is once again relative congruence in these answers. The majority of respondents believe that the aim of report cards is to communicate with families regarding how students are performing relative to the standards or learning targets. Taking into account the final response above, it does seem that some work needs to be done around determining a shared purpose for report cards. However, given the large number of teachers with similar beliefs, it does not seem that this would be too difficult. For some, a change of intention may be significant, but it appears that having a shared intention across the elementary schools would be a significant, but welcome, change.

Analysis of Grading Practices

Understanding teachers’ grading practices and their reasons behind them was necessary in determining the level of significance this change will require for our teachers. In the analysis of teachers’ grading practices, I have taken each practice into account separately, calculating the number of respondents who do or do not engage in that practice. I then confirmed those responses by cross-checking them with respondents’ reasoning behind their practices. I have also taken into account the time and effort it might take for a teacher to engage or stop engaging in each practice, which may hold some significance in teachers’ eyes. Thus, my determination of what constitutes a significant change is largely subjective; however, I have tried to define the significance of each change clearly, taking into account the respondents’ own words surrounding their practices and reasons for said practices.

Table 1. Grading Practices Survey Data

<u>Grading Practice</u>	<u>Aligned with SBG?</u>	<u># Yes^a</u>	<u>% Yes</u>	<u># No^b</u>	<u>% No</u>	<u>N</u>
Effort	No	16	18%	74	82%	90
Behavior	No	5	6%	85	94%	90
Reduce for late work	No	11	12%	78	88%	89
Rubrics/scoring guides	Yes	79	90%	9	10%	88
Letter grades	Neutral	14	16%	76	84%	90
Percentages	Contingent ^c	41	46%	49	54%	90
Average assignments	No	43	48%	46	52%	89
Grade homework	No	17	19%	72	81%	89
Weigh assignments	Contingent	48	53%	42	47%	90

^aYes = Teacher engages in this practice; ^bNo = Teacher does not engage in this practice; ^cContingent = Alignment with standards-based grading is dependent upon how practice is used.

Effort, Behavior and Late Work

Students' effort, in the eyes of teachers, is often determined through observation of students' behavior. If students appear to be on-task and are not disrupting others, they are likely to be deemed as demonstrating effort. Likewise, if they are performing at their presumed potential, they may be hailed as putting forth extra effort. Completing and turning in work on time are also seen as indicators of student effort. For these reasons, I have chosen to report these data together.

In answering survey questions regarding effort and behavior, 30 respondents indicated that they include effort, and 14 respondents indicated that they include behavior. Upon closer inspection, however, 14 of those who answered affirmatively regarding effort stated that they only mark students' effort in the "effort" box on the report card, leaving only 16 teachers who include effort when determining grades. Likewise, nine of those who answered affirmatively regarding behavior stated that they only mark students' behavior in the "learning behaviors" section of the report card, leaving only five teachers who include behavior when determining grades.

As shown in Table 1, 82% of the respondents do not include students' effort level when determining grades. Seventeen of those 74 teachers stated that effort is marked in a separate category on the report card. Many others reasoned that they do not include effort when determining grades because "It's about whether or not they met standard," "My grades are based on student learning," and "It has no bearing on their abilities." Respondents shared that "effort is a behavior" and that it is a "behavioral/citizenship responsibility, not an academic measurement." Others responded that including effort is not relevant or not appropriate, and that it "has nothing to do with knowing content." Several teachers shared that they do write about students' effort in the comment section of the report card, to keep parents informed.

Eighteen percent of the respondents do include students' effort when determining grades. Regarding their reasons, one teacher stated, "Effort effects work completion." Another teacher reasoned, "This measures progress!" Other teachers' responses indicated that they account for effort when a student's achievement falls between two grades, and that if the student is a hard worker, the teacher will give them the higher of the two grades. Seven teachers did not give a reason for their practice.

Ninety-four percent of the respondents do not include students' behavior when determining grades. Seventeen of those 85 teachers stated that behavior is marked in a separate category on the report card. Many others reasoned that they do not include behavior when determining grades because "Behavior is separate from academics," it is "not a part of the grade/rubric," and it is "not relevant." While several of these teachers stated that behavior sometimes impacts achievement, others shared that behavior should not make a difference, and that they are more concerned with showing what students know and want their grades to reflect student learning. As with student effort, several teachers shared that they include comments on students' behavior in the comment section of the report card.

Six percent of the respondents do include students' behavior when determining grades. One teacher stated, "Behavior can determine work being accomplished which affects learning and progress." Another teacher includes behavior, ". . . only if it keeps them from getting work done" and assigns students a zero if they won't cooperate and complete their work. Only one teacher did not give a reason for this practice.

Including effort and behavior in students' grades are practices that are not aligned with standards-based grading. Fix One of O'Connor's 15 Fixes for Broken Grades (2007) states, "Don't include student behaviors (effort, participation, adherence to class rules, etc.) in grades; include only achievement" (p. 19). By eliminating those factors from grades, teachers will be able to communicate clearly about student achievement. For the respondents who do include these factors, this means a change of practice is in order. Taking into account their reasoning, this will not be a significant change for about half of the teachers who include effort; most of them have only included effort in one or two subject areas, and many of them have done so in borderline cases for the most part. For those respondents who include effort in most or all subject

areas, or who have strong feelings about why effort should be included in grades, this will be a significant change. Because student misbehavior has the potential for evoking strong emotional responses in adults, for the five teachers who include behavior in grades, this will be a significant change in practice.

There were 89 responses to the question, “Do you reduce points/grades for late assignments?” Of those 89, 11 teachers said that they do engage in this practice, and 78 teachers said that they do not.

Eighty-eight percent of respondents do not reduce points or grades for late work. Nineteen of these teachers shared that they just want students to complete their work and turn it in, and several said that lateness did not indicate a student’s ability or achievement. Thirteen teachers commented that they are concerned about student understanding and mastery of skills and concepts, and students showing what they know. Many teachers reported giving students extra time to complete their work. Four teachers stated either that they only grade assessments, or that in-class assignments provide students with practice. Nineteen teachers did not give a reason for this practice.

Twelve percent of respondents do reduce points or grades for late work. Four of the 11 teachers reasoned that engaging in this practice teaches students responsibility. Three of them stated that it teaches punctuality. One teacher engages in this practice out of “fairness to students who complete work on time. If they have a good excuse (for being late), I do not reduce points.” Another teacher stated, “It’s wrong, but to get them to turn it in on time.” Three teachers did not share their reasons for reducing points for late work.

Reducing points or grades for late work is another practice that is not aligned with standards-based grading. In *Fix Two*, O’Connor (2007) states, “Don’t reduce marks on ‘work’

submitted late; provide support for the learner” (p. 26). He reasons that penalizing students can negatively impact their motivation, and distort the record of their achievement. For 12 percent of respondents, this will require a change in practice. Due to the fact that these teachers feel very strongly about teaching the importance of responsibility and punctuality, this change will be a significant one for them.

Rubrics or Scoring Guides

Eighty-eight teachers responded to the question, “Do you use rubrics or scoring guides for individual assignments?” Of those 88 teachers, 79 said that they do use rubrics or scoring guides and nine teachers said that they do not.

Ten percent of respondents do not use rubrics or scoring guides when scoring individual assignments. Of these nine teachers, five gave reasons for this. One teacher stated that it “takes too much time to create.” Another teacher indicated that he or she “might use if I had self-scoring guides for students.” Two other teachers shared that it was not applicable to the types of instruction they use or for the assignments given to students. The fifth teacher stated, “I provide immediate feedback on student achievements.” Four of the respondents did not share their reasons.

Ninety percent of respondents use rubrics or scoring guides for individual assignments. While 25 teachers did not share their reasons for using rubrics or scoring guides, 25 other teachers stated that they use rubrics so that students are aware of the expectations and are clear about what they need to do to meet standard. Twelve teachers shared that rubrics help them to be consistent and fair in their grading, and that rubrics make grading easier and less subjective. Five teachers stated that rubrics provide students with feedback on how to improve their work, and four teachers stated that they use scoring information to guide their instruction. Four teachers

responded that using rubrics were district policy or directive, or that rubrics had been given to them and were expected to be used. One teacher was “not sure” why he or she uses rubrics for scoring student work.

The use of rubrics or scoring guides is a practice that aligns with standards-based grading. In *Fix Eight*, O’Connor (2007) states, “Don’t assign grades using inappropriate or unclear performance standards; provide clear descriptions of achievement expectations” (p. 61). While they are not appropriate or necessary for every assignment, rubrics or scoring guides provide clear descriptions of performance meeting standard. Because they are already widely used in the district, and because the few teachers who do not use rubrics have not shared strong opposition to using them, this practice will not likely require significant change on the part of our teachers.

Letter Grades

There were 90 responses to the question, “Do you give letter grades for individual assignments?” Fourteen teachers responded that they do give letter grades, and 76 teachers responded that they do not.

Eighty-four percent of teachers responded that they do not give letter grades for individual assignments. For a great number of them, their reason was that our report card uses 4, 3, 2, 1 rather than letter grades. This is true for grades K-4 at this time; beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, this will be true for all elementary grades. Six teachers reasoned that letter grades are meaningless to students or too difficult for them to understand, while two other teachers reasoned that letter grades do not communicate a student’s capabilities. One teacher stated, “I want students to correct their work and learn from their mistakes.” This was echoed by two other teachers who shared that they go over assignments in class to discover what students

missed and talk about how to correct their mistakes. Twenty-two teachers declined to share their reasons for not giving letter grades to students.

Sixteen percent of teachers responded that they do give letter grades for individual assignments. Three of these 14 teachers stated that they do so because this is the current system for their grade level. One teacher replied, "I was asked by students so those receive a letter grade." Another teacher reasoned that "students and parents like grades." Eight teachers did not share their reasoning for this practice.

Giving letter grades for individual assignments is a practice that in and of itself is neutral regarding alignment with standards-based grading. According to O'Connor (2007), each level of achievement (in this case, letter grade) must be clearly described and the lowest level of proficiency labeled so that the assignment of a grade or mark can be justified. With the relatively low percentage of teachers who currently engage in this practice, and with the knowledge that in 2012-2013 there will no longer be letter grades used on any of the elementary report cards, it does not seem that this change in practice will be overly significant.

Percentages and Averaging Scores

Scoring student work using percentages easily lends itself to averaging those scores to determine grades. For this reason, I have chosen to report on these two practices together.

There were 90 responses to the question, "Do you give percentages for individual assignments?" Forty-one teachers responded that they do give percentage scores, and 49 teachers responded that they do not. Eighty-nine teachers responded to the question, "Do you average assignment scores when determining grades?" Forty-three of them responded that they do average scores, and 46 responded that they do not.

Fifty-four percent of respondents do not give percentage scores on individual assignments. Twelve of them report that they teach primary grades and percentages are not used. Four teachers stated that they use the 4, 3, 2, 1 scoring consistently, and one of the four said, “Using 4, 3, 2, 1 is more authentic than percentages.” Four teachers responded that they are focused on whether or not students met standard. Regarding the use of percentages, one teacher replied, “It’s not a good use of time. I am interested in the end result and whether or not they need more assistance or re-teaching and if I need to modify how I teach something.” Another teacher said, “I do not feel percentages accurately depict student progress on level of performance.” Two final teachers said, “I don’t know the reasoning in giving numbers,” and “Not sure; I give points.” Sixteen teachers did not provide their reasons for not giving percentages scores to students.

Forty-six percent of respondents do give percentage scores on individual assignments. Ten teachers stated that they use percentages to help determine grades for report cards. Four teachers report entering test data as the percentage of correct answers and one additional teacher shared that he or she assigns points, and Easy Grade Pro converts those points to percentages. Five other teachers indicated that they use percentages to give students feedback, and that it is more understandable to students. Four additional teachers shared that this is what their team or grade level does, that it is the district grading system, and “I thought it was expected.” Eight different teachers mentioned tradition, familiarity, and ease as reasons for giving percentage scores, with one indicating that he or she was not sure of their reason, and a final teacher saying that he or she is “not confident in any other way to do it.” Seven teachers did not provide their reasons for assigning percentage scores for individual assignments.

Fifty-two percent of teachers responded that they do not average assignments when determining grades. Eight of these teachers indicated that they keep track of whether or not the student has met the standard or not, and one additional teacher stated that he or she keeps track of final summative assessments only. Five teachers commented that averaging assignments does not show what students know at the end, with one of them saying, “Averaging doesn’t accurately reflect student mastery of skills.” Six additional teachers stated that they look at the most recent data or trend to determine a student’s grade. One of those six commented, “If they didn’t know a skill and then learned it, the student and parent need to know only that they got it.” Twenty teachers did not share their reasons for not averaging scores.

Forty-eight percent of teachers responded that they do average assignments when determining grades. Ten respondents indicated that they average student scores because Easy Grade Pro, our computer grading program, does it automatically. One additional teacher averages scores in pre-weighted categories, and another increases a student’s average if they are improving over time. Seven teachers shared that averaging is how they generate overall grades for the report card. Three others reported that they average scores to look at student progress. One teacher said, “This is only part of their grade. It helps me know how each child is doing.” Another teacher stated, “I don’t like looking at one assessment or task to determine a grade. I look at many.” One teacher responded, “I think it’s fair.” Another said, “That is what I was told to do.” And still another shared his or her reason as, “I guess because this is how I’ve always done it. Makes sense, well, until reading the book, that is.” Fourteen teachers did not share their reasoning for averaging scores.

Depending on how the percentage scores are used, the practice of giving percentages can align with standards-based grading practices. Averaging percentage scores across an entire unit

of study, quarter, or trimester, does not align with standards-based grading practices. In Fix 11, O'Connor (2007) states, "Don't rely on the mean; consider other measures of central tendency and use professional judgment" (p. 81). He goes on to explain that using the median (the middle score by rank) or the mode (the most frequently occurring score) often more accurately represents a student's achievement. The fact that nearly half of the respondents engage in the practice of averaging scores indicates that changing this practice may be significant for many of our teachers. The knowledge that this may only require a modification in practice could reduce the level of significance of this change in the minds of our teachers.

Homework

Eighty-nine teachers responded to the question, "Do you include homework when determining grades?" Twenty-two respondents indicated that they do include homework, and 67 respondents indicated that they do not. Upon closer inspection, however, five of those who answered affirmatively stated that they only record homework in the "Learning Behaviors" or "demonstrates effort/completes assignments" box on the report card, leaving only 17 teachers who include homework when determining grades.

Eighty-one percent of the respondents do not include homework when determining grades. Twelve of those 72 teachers indicated that homework is practice, and one teacher stated that homework "informs me for my future teaching". Eleven teachers shared that they do not know the extent to which students receive help on their homework, and one of those 11 said that he or she does not think it is fair to grade homework based upon this. Four teachers spoke about homework not necessarily reflecting students' abilities and that they want to be certain of what students know. Fifteen teachers stated that they mark homework in either the "homework" or "participation/effort" section of the report card only. Two teachers check homework for

completion but do not grade it, and one teacher commented that homework, “teaches responsibility but is not fair to grade”. Nineteen respondents did not explain why they do not include homework when determining grades.

Nineteen percent of respondents do include homework when determining grades. Three teachers do so in order to teach students responsibility. One teacher stated, “Homework is part of the learning process.” Another teacher grades homework minimally, stating, “Research shows students who complete homework are more successful academically.” One teacher uses homework to see whether students understand and remember what they have learned. For another teacher, homework is only finishing something that was started in class. Six teachers did not share their reasons for including homework when determining grades.

Homework is usually seen as formative in nature. Grades on a report card are by nature summative, so the practice of including homework when determining grades does not align with standards-based grading. Although only 19 percent of teachers engage in this practice, their reasons indicate strong beliefs about the benefits of grading homework. For those teachers, this will mean a significant change in practice.

Weight

There were 90 responses to the question, “Do you weigh some assignments differently than others?” Forty-eight teachers responded that they do weigh assignments differently, and 42 teachers responded that they do not.

Forty-seven percent of respondents do not weigh some assignments differently than others. Eight of them stated that they only grade on whether or not the student met standard. Nine teachers indicated that they did not think weighing assignments differently was important, relevant, or applicable. Three teachers stated that they only grade summative assessments, and

four others use assignments strictly to drive instruction. One teacher looks for consistency and accuracy in student work, and another teacher commented, “Weighting can skew their grades to make their ability level hidden.” One teacher indicated that weighing assignments is difficult for teachers and parents, and another teacher is “not sure how or when to weigh differently.”

Fourteen teachers declined to share their reasons for not weighing assignments differently.

Fifty-three percent of respondents do weigh some assignments differently than others. Respondents reported many different factors by which they weighed assignments. Eleven teachers weigh summative assessments over daily work or quizzes. Five teachers weigh assignments based on standards, four weigh based on difficulty, and three weigh items measuring mastery higher than new skills. Two teachers weigh reading comprehension higher than vocabulary or phonics, and one weighs extended response work over fluency in reading. One teacher weighs academic skills over work habits, one weighs based on student ability, one weighs based on content or skill, another weighs independent versus group work, another weighs handwriting lower than the content of the work, and one weighs more recent work higher than older work. Finally, one teacher stated, “I pick certain assignments to use for grades,” although he or she did not indicate how those choices are made. Nineteen teachers did not share the factors they use when weighing assignments.

Seven teachers indicated that they weigh summative assignments more than others because they are more important. Three teachers said that they weigh assignments because they need to know students’ learning. Two teachers weigh some assignments over others due to higher order thinking or complexity involved in the work, and two others weigh work according to standards. Two teachers indicated that they do not grade all assignments, and that many papers are for practice. One teacher reasoned that, “Some reading tests are more difficult and it doesn’t

seem fair to weight it at 100%.” Another teacher weighs assignments, “To give a reason to complete daily work and to practice accountability, goal setting, and show growth or achievement.” Twenty-two teachers did not share their reasons for weighing some assignments differently than others.

Depending on the factors used, the practice of weighing some assignments differently than others can align with standards-based grading practices. Emphasizing more recent achievement is a practice that aligns with standards-based grading. Although 47 percent of respondents do not weigh student work, many of them focus on using student work to monitor student learning and to determine whether or not students met standard. For those teachers, changing their practice to emphasize more recent achievement will not likely be a significant change. For the 53 percent of teachers who currently weigh assignments, changing the factors by which they do so will not likely be too significant of a change either.

Other Factors

The final survey question regarding teachers’ grading practices was, “What other factors do you consider when determining grades?” Thirty-six teachers responded to this question. Nine of them reiterated their focus on standards and skill mastery. Four teachers factor in student performance, and an additional teacher tries to ensure, “A fair evaluation of major expectations and whether credit was given for demonstration of achievement through multiple assessments and observations.” Eight teachers factor in students’ growth and improvement, three factor in test scores, three include daily work, and three more include student attendance. Two teachers factor in student participation, and two others factor in quality and accuracy of student work. One teacher stated that he or she does not factor in anything else, “but make sure to acknowledge growth/success!”

Many of the factors teachers shared above align with standards-based grading practices. Focusing on standards and skill mastery, and using multiple assessments and observations to evaluate students definitely align with standards-based grading. Growth and improvement, attendance, and participation are all important factors that impact student learning. Including them in a grade can distort the achievement being reported to parents, but these factors can be reported separately. Based on the responses given, if teachers have a clear understanding about which factors to consider when determining grades and which to report separately, this does not seem likely to be a significant change in practice.

Analysis of Concern Data

One of the goals of this study was to identify and remove barriers associated with the change to standards-based grading. In order to accomplish this, it was necessary to understand teachers' concerns about the upcoming transition to a new grade reporting system. Concern data were collected at the beginning and the end of the book study.

The Stages of Concern Questionnaire was scored according to the directions given by Hall and Hord (2001). This quantitative data resulted in a line graph for each survey, indicating the respondents' peaks and valleys – their areas of greatest and least concern. On a spreadsheet, I entered each respondent's identifier names, the two highest peaks and two lowest valleys from their line graphs, and their qualitative answers to the question, "When you think about standards-based grading, what concerns do you have?" Table 2 represents the total percentages for each peak and valley from the pre-book study surveys.

Table 2. Stages of Concern: Pre-Book Study Survey Data

<u>Stage of Concern</u>	<u>Concern regarding:</u>	<u>% High 1^a</u>	<u>% High 2^b</u>	<u>% Low 1^c</u>	<u>% Low 2^d</u>
Informational	More information needed	41%	32%	0%	2%
Personal	How it will affect teacher	28%	40%	0%	2%
Management	Time/materials required	17%	14%	10%	13%
Consequence	How it will affect students and parents	1%	0%	67%	21%
Collaboration	Working with colleagues	12%	8%	13%	30%
Refocusing	Ideas for improvement	1%	6%	10%	32%

Note. N = 102. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole.

^aHigh 1 = Respondents' highest stage of concern; ^bHigh 2 = Respondents' second highest stage of concern; ^cLow 1 = Respondents' lowest stage of concern; ^dLow 2 = Respondents' second lowest stage of concern

As shown in Table 2, the stage of highest concern at the beginning of the book study was Informational, with 41% of respondents placing it as their highest concern, and 32% of respondents placing it as their second highest concern. In their written responses, 14 different teachers expressed concerns about their own understanding of standards-based grading and how to assess students correctly. One teacher wrote, “I am concerned about my ability to fairly assess students in comparison to other more experienced teachers that have different methods/practices.” Another teacher’s concerns were expressed in these questions, “How do we assess all students? What about Special Education or other struggling students? If a student

hasn't met benchmark on one assessment, do they fail the quarter?" A final teacher stated, "Still a bit foggy on standards-based grading. I am really struggling with defining and understanding of learning standards in math. I have a better understanding of the reading and writing standards."

Four teachers wanted more information about the report card, and when it would be changed to better align with the standards. Several teachers expressed the need for professional development. Six different teachers asked about training on how to grade appropriately and consistently. One of those six wrote, "My concern is that our training will be thorough, so that in the end I can finally feel confident that our grading actually shows real student achievement." Two teachers mentioned training on using the online grade book, and two other teachers asked for ongoing training and discussions for teachers in order to create consistency in the district.

The stage of second highest concern was Personal, with 28% of respondents placing it as their highest concern, and 40% of respondents placing it as their second highest concern. Although this was marked as a high concern, there were relatively few written responses that fell into this category. Two teachers were concerned about the number of changes taking place. Three teachers mentioned the time involved and managing all of their responsibilities. Two teachers expressed concerns about having more required of them, and one teacher was concerned, "that it will be tied to my job review, performance, and pay."

The stage of lowest concern to teachers was Consequence, with 67% of respondents placing it as their lowest concern, and 21% of respondents placing it as their second lowest concern. Although this was the lowest stage of concern, there were many written responses that fell into this category. Eighteen different teachers shared concerns about how to educate parents about standards-based grading and how to handle parent concerns in this regard. One of these 18 wrote, "I am concerned about parents not understanding how standards-based grading works and

how it can positively impact kids.” Another stated, “One of the biggest challenges is educating families on the paradigm shift. They at times have trouble deciphering the language of the standards. They also become concerned when their child’s grade doesn’t reflect growth.” A third teacher expressed support for standards-based grading but also stated, “However, my concern is sharing this vision and change with families and how we can get their support. This will help with our students’ motivation.”

Ten teachers shared that they were concerned with how standards-based grading would impact students, their grades, and demonstrate their growth. One of them wrote, “The students’ learning abilities are of utmost importance. How will they be fairly judged in a learning style best for them? How would we help them in learning what they do best?” Eight teachers were concerned about motivating students, and one of them asked, “How will these grades be more meaningful to the students and parents?” Three teachers wondered about students at both ends of the achievement spectrum. One of them wrote, “What do we do with students who already come meeting standards? How do we evaluate and report their skills? Then – the reverse – how do we evaluate those who never meet standard?”

Collaboration and Refocusing scored very closely as the second lowest stage of concern. When valleys one and two were combined, 43% of respondents placed Collaboration as their second lowest concern, and 42% of respondents placed Refocusing as their second lowest concern. Although Collaboration was one of the second lowest stages, there were many written concerns that fell into this category.

The overwhelming concern expressed regarding collaboration was regarding consistency and getting everyone on the same page. Twenty-seven different teachers expressed this concern in their written responses. One of them wrote, “I am mostly concerned about getting everyone

consistent and accurate. It is hard enough to get 3 team members from 1 school on the same page so district-wide seems almost impossible.” Another one wrote, “I want to be reassured that my colleagues are as consistent in their grading so that I don’t appear to be the ‘hard’ teacher.” Five teachers shared that they want to work together in their grade-level teams to determine how to grade. Two teachers expressed concerns about the paradigm shift. One of them wrote, “Additionally, true standards-based grading requires a pervasive philosophical shift that can be difficult for teachers to ‘buy into’.” A final teacher stated, “I am also concerned about getting our staff to see the importance of standards-based grading and to see how it will drive their instruction.”

Refocusing was the other second-lowest stage of concern. This was confirmed with relatively few written concerns. Five teachers shared their concerns regarding the alignment of our instructional materials and assessments with the standards. One of them wrote, “In order for this to work I think it’s important that curriculum is directly aligned with the standards and also the assessments, or we leave the teacher to fend for themselves.” Two teachers wondered how standards-based grading and Response to Intervention (RTI) fit together, and how to show what supports are being given to students who are below standards. One teacher expressed a concern about not being involved in creating assessments, and another expressed frustration about the standards continually changing.

Four teachers shared strictly positive comments in their written responses. One said that he or she had no concerns, and that “standards-based grading is the ‘best practice’ in evaluation of student learning.” The second teacher wrote, “I’m not really concerned. I feel that we have been heading in that direction for a while.” The third stated, “I don’t have any concerns with

standards-based grading. I'm excited about it!" The fourth shared, "I am very excited about this class."

Table 3. Stages of Concern: Post-Book Study Survey Data

<u>Stage of Concern</u>	<u>Concern regarding:</u>	<u>% High 1^a</u>	<u>% High 2^b</u>	<u>% Low 1^c</u>	<u>% Low 2^d</u>
Informational	More information needed	15%	21%	0%	7%
Personal	How it will affect teacher	37%	28%	0%	2%
Management	Time/materials required	21%	21%	10%	17%
Consequence	How it will affect students and parents	0%	1%	71%	18%
Collaboration	Working with colleagues	17%	11%	15%	33%
Refocusing	Ideas for improvement	10%	18%	4%	23%

Note. $N = 93$. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole.

^aHigh 1 = Respondents' highest stage of concern; ^bHigh 2 = Respondents' second highest stage of concern; ^cLow 1 = Respondents' lowest stage of concern; ^dLow 2 = Respondents' second lowest stage of concern

The highest stage of concern at the beginning of the book study was Informational, as shown in Table 2. However, Table 3 shows that the Informational stage was neither the first nor the second highest stage of concern at the end of the book study, indicating that many teachers felt informed about standards-based grading by the end of the study. Table 4 below shows the comparisons between the two peak concerns from the surveys taken before and after the book

study. Although Refocusing was not a high concern for most teachers, the overall level of concern increased by 21%. This may indicate that, with more information about standards-based grading, teachers now have more ideas about how to improve our related practices.

Table 4. Concerns: Before and After

<u>Stage of Concern</u>	<u>Concern regarding:</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Informational	More information needed	Level of concern decreased by \approx 50%
Personal	How it will affect teacher	Level of concern decreased by 3%
Management	Time/materials required	Level of concern increased by 11%
Consequence	How it will affect students and parents	Level of concern remained the same
Collaboration	Working with colleagues	Level of concern increased by 8%
Refocusing	Ideas for improvement	Level of concern increased by 21%

Note. Comparison between High 1 and High 2 of Tables 2 and 3

The highest stage of concern at the end of the book study was Personal, which was the second highest stage of concern at the beginning of the study. Although this was overwhelmingly marked as the highest stage of concern post-book study, with 65% of respondents marking it as either their highest or second highest stage, the overall percentage dropped from 68% pre-book study. There was only one written comment that fell primarily into this category. This particular teacher wrote that he or she “Would like to see the district and state make up their minds about how to grade and leave us alone to finally teach.” While there were many more comments

reflecting concerns about how this implementation will affect teachers personally, those comments also reflected concerns about managing time and materials, and are therefore discussed below.

Management was the second highest stage of concern, with 42% of teachers marking it as either their highest or second highest stage. A majority of the written responses expressed concerns about the amount of time involved in either this implementation, or the time involved in grading students to standards. One of those 20 teachers wrote, “I am concerned about the amount of time and energy put in toward standards-based grading when we already have so much to implement in our classrooms. Take something off our plates before adding more.” Fifteen teachers shared concerns about setting up their electronic grade books and organizing themselves appropriately. One of them asked, “How do we align Easy Grade Pro, grades online, report cards and standards-based grades?” Four teachers stated that they were concerned about having systems to support this implementation, and one of them wrote, “The district doesn’t do well at launching new things with proper time and support. I have been in FPSD 6 years. What is going to be different this time?”

As shown on Tables 2 and 3, Consequence scored as the stage of lowest concern at both the beginning and end of the book study, which indicates that teachers believe that implementing standards-based grading will have a positive impact on students and families. This is confirmed, with relatively few written comments. Nine teachers shared their concerns about educating parents, keeping them updated, and handling their questions with confidence. One of the nine wrote, “I don’t have any pressing concerns about standards-based grading other than making sure parents/guardians understand the process.” Five teachers reported concerns about involving and motivating students and showing their growth. Four different teachers shared concerns around

teamwork and being involved in creating assessments, discussing how to grade students, and how this will impact instruction. Two final teachers shared concerns about students at either end of the achievement spectrum. One wrote, “How will highly capable students be accurately graded? Highly Capable standards needed.” The other is concerned about, “. . . the impact on Special Education kids and having a way to say something other than ‘does not meet standard’ could make students feel like failures!”

Collaboration was one of the second lowest stages of concern at the beginning of the book study, and was the second lowest stage at the end. This is confirmed, with few written responses in this area. Ten teachers expressed that they were concerned about creating consistency across the district and building a common understanding. One of them wrote, “I would like the whole district to be doing the same thing so that grades are more meaningful.” Two final teachers wrote about needing time to work in their teams to create rubrics and summative assessments.

There were many positive comments written on the post-book study surveys. Six teachers shared their excitement about using standards-based grading, and one of them wrote, “A lot of my concerns have been addressed. I better understand standards-based grading and I think it will be easier.” Five teachers expressed their support for this initiative. One of them stated, “I think standards-based grading is the best way to measure student achievement, to figure out what students still need to learn, and to base instruction off of.” Another of those five wrote, “I think that standards-based grading clearly communicates to parents the level of their child based on the standards.” Four teachers shared that they are currently using standards-based grading. One of them wrote, “I am very supportive of standards-based grading. It makes a great deal of sense. I have been using it in math for years.” Three teachers shared that they do not have any concerns

at this time, and three others stated that they are willing to use standards-based grading when everything is in place to support them.

In summary, the beliefs, grading practices and concerns discussed in this chapter provide a clear picture of where we are as an elementary staff in terms of implementing standards-based grading. The next chapter will discuss the themes that emerged from this data, and the recommendations drawn from them.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore the extent to which the transition to standards-based grading will require a significant change in the grading practices of Franklin Pierce Schools' elementary teachers. In order to accomplish this, it was necessary to understand teachers' current grading practices and their concerns about the upcoming transition to a new grade reporting system. Gaining an understanding of teachers' beliefs about grading was also beneficial in determining the significance of this change in teachers' minds.

In the analysis of these data, several themes emerged. Collaboration, technology and support, and educating families are the themes discussed below.

Themes

Collaboration

In both of the surveys, Collaboration scored as the second lowest stage of concern. However, in 48 separate written responses, teachers expressed the need for ongoing collaboration with their peers in order to create and maintain consistency across the district regarding standards-based grading. For this reason, I have included collaboration as a theme.

Two topics surfaced from the data, around which teachers could collaborate in a discussion-type setting. Motivating students and teaching them responsibility while eliminating the practices of counting late work and homework would be a topic worthy of discussion. Another topic would be how to involve students in the grading process.

Working as Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) has become part of the culture of Franklin Pierce Schools. The second of our PLC Guiding Questions is "How do we know if

students have learned?” This is exactly where standards-based grading fits in. Teachers wrote about their need to work together in their PLC’s to create rubrics and assessments, to score student work and determine grades, and to use their student achievement data to drive their instruction.

Technology and Support

The Personal and Management stages were the two highest stages of concern at the end of the book study. Out of the comments related to these stages came requests for the online grade book to be set up with all of the standards, for the report card to be modified to align more closely with the standards, and for different professional development trainings to be offered to support teachers in this transition. Because many of these requests overlapped, I have chosen to group technology and support together as one theme.

Along with the request for having the online grade book ready to go with standards already entered, came the request for training on how to use the online grade book efficiently. Teachers also requested support in how to organize their grade books and materials, and how to manage their time. From the analysis of grading practices data, one area in which it may be appropriate to offer training is in the determination of grades, eliminating using the mean and instead using other measures of central tendency, emphasizing more recent achievement.

Educating Families

The final theme emerging from these data is educating families. This was a relatively strong concern of teachers. While some teachers expressed the need to be confident in handling parent concerns, most of the comments in this area were around ensuring that parents and students understood the process of standards-based grading, so that they could participate as partners in the process.

A significant number of responses indicated the need to share student growth and progress with parents, with the concern that grading to standards may leave that out of the reporting process. This fits in with our third PLC Guiding Question, “What do we do when students do/don’t learn?” As a district involved with RTI, we have many different supports in place to help students, and we are continually working to improve. Teachers expressed the desire to share these supports with families in an easier manner than by writing them in the comment section of the report card.

Throughout the book study sessions, teachers have participated in discussions about standards-based grading and have shared many of the same concerns expressed in their writing. The book study facilitators have had ongoing discussions as well, and have already determined some outcomes. I will discuss those outcomes as well as my recommendations in the next section.

Outcomes and Recommendations

During the course of the book study, our Teaching and Learning Department has been in contact with other school districts that have already transitioned to standards-based grading. From those contacts, we have obtained standards-based grading templates for Easy Grade Pro, our online grade book. We will be modifying these templates to match our report card, and using this tool until the Common Core State Standards are in place. At that time, we will make whatever changes are necessary to be in alignment. One recommendation I have for our online report card is to consider adding a “growth/progress” box for each subject area, with clear indicators for marking student growth. This would likely require a committee for gaining teacher input, as this was an area of significant concern to teachers.

At this point in the school year, our Teaching and Learning Department is developing a draft Professional Development Plan for the 2012-2013 school year. They want to create a menu of options from which teachers will be able to choose, to better meet their individual needs. From the analysis of survey data, I am recommending the following as professional development options:

- Easy Grade Pro Training: This could potentially be a multi-session training, beginning with set up and navigation through the standards-based grading version of Easy Grade Pro. Follow-up sessions could include data management and uploading to report cards.
- Organization/Time Management – training/discussion group: This training and discussion session would begin with helping teachers to identify the most important assessment measures to collect in each subject area, giving them time and help with creating assessment plans for units of study, and end with the sharing of tips and strategies for time management. This could also be a potential multi-session opportunity.
- Determining Grades – training/practice group: This training session would give teachers the opportunity to practice determining grades, using their own classroom data, with support available to help them. This would be important for those teachers who don't quite feel confident in determining grades on their own.
- Motivating Students – discussion group: This discussion session would center around eliminating the practices of grading down for late work and grading homework. Teachers need other strategies for motivating students, and this would be a forum for sharing those strategies.

- Involving Students in the Grading Process – discussion group: This discussion session would be another forum in which teachers could share how they involve students and help them understand and participate in the grading process.

To address teachers' expressed need for collaboration time, and to clearly demonstrate how standards-based grading fits with our ongoing PLC cycle, I recommend the creation of a district-wide elementary PLC protocol document. This document would give guidance to teacher teams as they work together through the learning cycle. It would also address teachers' concern for continuity across the district regarding standards-based grading.

My final recommendations address teachers' concerns regarding educating families about standards-based grading. I recommend that information be sent home to parents from the district level, explaining standards-based grading and our transition process. This information could also be posted online. I recommend that we hold meetings in which parents can ask questions and become more informed. These meetings could be held in conjunction with building Parent-Teacher Association meetings or as stand-alone meetings. We could also post frequently asked questions online. Finally, I recommend the creation of talking points for teachers and principals, so there is common language being used across the district regarding standards-based grading practices.

Reflection and Concluding Thoughts

In the ever-busy world of education, we are often so caught up in meeting fast-approaching deadlines that we rarely slow down enough to engage in extended conversations with each other. Likewise, those of us in leadership positions rarely take – or make – the time to

ask teachers to share their concerns about a new initiative. I think that, perhaps, we are afraid of what teachers might say, and we skip this step in lieu of time.

This research project began out of my desire to learn more about effective grading practices and how I, as a principal, could support teachers in their quest to promote student learning through their practices. When I subsequently became involved with the book study as a first step toward standards-based grading, I wanted to make certain that as a system we eliminated as many barriers as possible for teachers in this transition. This required creating an open atmosphere in which teachers felt comfortable sharing their questions and concerns. It also required listening (or reading, in my case) to what concerned them the most and created the largest barriers for them.

From this experience, I have learned that it is well worth the time to engage teachers in conversations about those things that get in the way of them doing their best work. Because of our teachers' input, we as a district will be able to design supports and professional development to help them be successful in this implementation. It is my hope that as a district, we will continue to work in this manner with our teachers, so they feel supported and capable of helping our students achieve at high levels.

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Appendix A

STAGES OF CONCERN QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine what people who are using or thinking about using standards-based grading are concerned about at various times during the innovation adoption process. The items were developed from typical responses of school and college teachers who ranged from no knowledge at all about various programs to many years experience in using them. Therefore, *a good part of the items on this questionnaire may appear to be of little relevance or irrelevant to you at this time.* For the completely irrelevant items, please circle “0” on the scale. Other items will represent those concerns you *do* have, in varying degrees of intensity, and should be marked higher on the scale, according to the explanation at the top of each of the following pages.

For example:

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| This statement is very true of me at this time. | 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 <u>7</u> |
| This statement is somewhat true of me now. | 0 1 2 3 <u>4</u> 5 6 7 |
| This statement is not at all true of me at this time. | 0 <u>1</u> 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| This statement is irrelevant to me. | <u>0</u> 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |

Please respond to the items in terms of *your present concerns*, or how you feel about your involvement or potential involvement with standards-based grading. Please think of standards-based grading in terms of *your own perceptions* of what it involves. Remember to respond to each item in terms of *your present concerns* about your involvement or potential involvement with standards-based grading.

Thank you for taking time to complete this task.

For the purposes of linking your pre- and post- survey information together, please provide the following:

Name of your first pet: _____

Name of the street on which you lived for most of your childhood: _____

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<u>Irrelevant</u>	<u>Not true of me now</u>	<u>Somewhat true of me now</u>			<u>Very true of me now</u>		
1. I am concerned about students' attitudes toward standards-based grading.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
2. I now know of some other approaches that might work better.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
3. I don't even know what standards-based grading is.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
4. I am concerned about not having enough time to organize myself each day.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
5. I would like to help other faculty in their use of standards-based grading.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
6. I have a very limited knowledge about standards-based grading.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
7. I would like to know the effect of standards-based grading on my professional status.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
8. I am concerned about conflict between my interests and my responsibilities.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
9. I am concerned about revising my use of standards-based grading.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
10. I would like to develop working relationships with both our faculty and outside faculty using standards-based grading.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
11. I am concerned about how standards-based grading affects students.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
12. I am not concerned about standards-based grading.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
13. I would like to know who will make system decisions concerning standards-based grading.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
14. I would like to discuss the possibility of using standards-based grading.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
15. I would like to know what resources are available if we decide to adopt standards-based grading.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
16. I am concerned about my inability to manage all standards-based grading requires.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
17. I would like to know how my teaching or administration is supposed to change.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
18. I would like to familiarize other departments or persons with the progress of standards-based grading.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
19. I am concerned about evaluating my impact on students.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
20. I would like to revise standards-based grading's connection to instruction.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
21. I am completely occupied with other things.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
22. I would like to modify our use of standards-based grading based on the experiences of our students.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
23. Although I don't know about standards-based grading, I am concerned about other things in the area.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
24. I would like to excite my students about their part in standards-based grading.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
25. I am concerned about my time spent working with nonacademic problems related to standards-based grading.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 7

Appendix B

GRADING SURVEY – ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

For the purposes of linking your pre- and post- survey information together, please provide the following:

Name of your first pet: _____

Name of the street on which you lived for most of your childhood: _____

Please answer the following based upon your current grading practices:

1. In your professional opinion, what is the reason for grading/scoring student work? _____

2. Do you give percentages for individual assignments? Yes No
If yes, for which subject areas? _____

Whether yes or no, what is your reasoning for this practice? _____

3. Do you give letter grades for individual assignments? Yes No
If yes, for which subject areas? _____

Whether yes or no, what is your reasoning for this practice? _____

4. Do you use rubrics or scoring guides for individual assignments? Yes No
If yes, for which subject areas? _____

Whether yes or no, what is your reasoning for this practice? _____

5. Do you reduce points/grades for late assignments? Yes No
If yes, for which subject areas? _____

Whether yes or no, what is your reasoning for this practice? _____

6. Do you weigh some assignments differently than others? Yes No
If yes, for which subject areas? _____
If yes, by what factors do you weigh them? _____
Whether yes or no, what is your reasoning for this practice? _____

7. Do you average assignment scores when determining grades? Yes No
If yes, for which subject areas? _____
Whether yes or no, what is your reasoning for this practice? _____

8. Do you include homework when determining grades? Yes No
If yes, for which subject areas? _____
Whether yes or no, what is your reasoning for this practice? _____

9. Do you include students' effort when determining grades? Yes No
If yes, for which subject areas? _____
Whether yes or no, what is your reasoning for this practice? _____

10. Do you include students' behavior when determining grades? Yes No
If yes, for which subject areas? _____
Whether yes or no, what is your reasoning for this practice? _____

11. What other factors do you consider when determining grades? _____

12. In your professional opinion, what is the purpose of report cards? _____

Appendix C Student Progress Report - Grade 04



Teacher:
School Year: 2011-2012

Principal:
Phone:

Grading Criteria
4 - Exceeds grade level standards
3 - Meets grade level standards
2 - Approaching grade level standards
1 - Below grade level standards
NE - Not Evaluated at this time

Attendance	Fall	Winter	Spring	Total
Days Enrolled				
Days Present				
Days Absent				
Days Tardy				

Academic Achievement

Learning Behaviors	F	W	S
Uses study skills <i>- Organizes self and materials, strives to achieve quality, follows directions, demonstrates listening skills, works independently</i>			
Uses time effectively <i>- Begins and completes assigned class work on time, asks for help when needed</i>			
Treats others with respect <i>- Cooperates with peers, works appropriately with adults, is courteous in words and actions</i>			
Assumes accountability for self <i>- Takes responsibility for actions, attempts to solve problems</i>			
Connects school and home <i>- Meets homework requirements, comes to class prepared</i>			
Mathematics	F	W	S
Multi-digit multiplication			
Fractions, decimals, and mixed numbers			
Concepts of area			
Measurement, algebra, data/probability			
Reasoning, problem solving, and communication			
Demonstrates effort/Completes assignments			
Science	F	W	S
Demonstrates understanding of scientific content and concepts in units of study, including Magnetism and Electricity, Earth Materials, and Human Body			
Applies understanding of scientific inquiry process			
Demonstrates effort/Completes assignments			
Social Studies	F	W	S
Demonstrates understanding of content and concepts related to Washington State in the past and present			
Applies research skills as demonstrated in projects and activities			
Demonstrates effort/Completes assignments			

Reading	F	W	S
Understands and uses different skills and strategies to read at 4th grade level <i>- Uses various word identification strategies - Expands reading vocabulary</i>			
Understands the meaning of what is read at 4th grade level <i>- Comprehends important ideas and details - Understands elements of literature - Expands comprehension through critical thinking</i>			
Reads with fluency, expression, and confidence			
Sets goals and evaluates progress to improve reading			
Demonstrates effort/Completes assignments			
Writing	F	W	S
Writes clearly and effectively <i>- Develops a topic or theme; organizes thoughts around beginning, middle, and end</i>			
Applies writing conventions <i>- Correct grammar, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization</i>			
Writes in a variety of forms for different audiences and purposes			
Understands and uses the writing process <i>- Prewrite, draft, revise, edit, and publish</i>			
Writes legibly			
Demonstrates effort/Completes assignments			
Music	F	W	S
Demonstrates concepts and skills			
Demonstrates effort and participation			
Health and Fitness/PE	F	W	S
Demonstrates concepts and skills			
Demonstrates effort and participation			

