



Director of Secondary Education

Dr. Todd P. Bloomquist

541.842.3626

FAX 541.842.1090

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Dear Parents and Students,

Welcome back to the start of a great new school year. Our secondary schools have worked hard this summer to get everything ready for students. Our teachers and support staff are focused on the success of each student attending Medford Schools and it is our honor to serve in this capacity. We hope that this year is the best one yet for you and your student. In addition to helping all students be successful academically, it is also our passion to help all students discover their strengths, skills, and talents. Each student is on a journey and we are pleased to be a part of your student's life on this portion of that adventure.

There are only a few things that are certain in life and one of those is that of change. I would like to share with you an important change that is happening this year in all of our middle schools and high schools that will have a direct impact on your student. Beginning this school year, all teachers in our secondary schools (grades 7-12) are changing how they evaluate student work. This change is known as "Proficiency-Based Grading" and is something that has been authorized and encouraged by the Oregon legislature. Last year we worked on transitioning to the new requirements and many of you also attended parent informational meetings regarding this change. This year we are ready to implement the new grading system. If you have questions about proficiency grading, please don't hesitate to contact the school your student is attending. Teachers will also communicate individually with parents when they share their course grading expectations.

The changes stem from a 2011 state law that allows teachers to assess students' academic abilities using standards-based proficiency measures and requires them to communicate how students are doing on each of the standards. Please know that even though the grading method is changing, students will still be receiving traditional letter grades. There are four key factors in these changes:

- Oregon's new graduation requirements include passing state exams in reading, writing, and math in order to receive a regular diploma;
- Course requirements to receive high school credit and meet college entrance requirements have become much more rigorous;

- The growing emphasis on standards and performance assessments makes current reporting practices inadequate; and
- The Medford School Board has set a goal to extend student learning beyond minimal levels of proficiency.

The primary purpose for grading in our district is to communicate academic progress to students, their families, employers, and post-secondary institutions. A grade should reflect what a student learns and is able to do in a course. Non-academic factors like attendance, attitude, behavior, and completion of work are valuable, but will be communicated separately through Career Related Learning indicators or comments on progress reports. Homework and practice opportunities are an important part of the learning process for each student and we welcome your partnership in helping students take the time to practice so they are ready for proficiency assessments in class.

This year, all grading and reporting will be based on a student's level of performance toward the proficiency of a standard and not on a traditional bell curve. Students are not in competition with each other for the highest score, rather students will be striving to master the course content and meet or exceed the state learning standards.

Below is the general time-frame we are pursuing for the 2013-14 School Year:

- Fully implement proficiency-based teaching and learning at all secondary schools
- Roll out of a new report card, progress report, and Parent Access Link (PAL)
- Continue parent and student focus groups at individual school sites

Throughout this year, schools will hold various parent meetings to communicate additional aspects of the changes we are making to the grading system. As this progresses, please continue to check our district website (<http://www.medford.k12.or.us/Page.asp?NavID=3757>) for the most up-to-date information. You can also check your student's school website for more information through our main website at www.medford.k12.or.us; under the "Schools" tab, you can select your school.

Your questions or concerns are very important to us. Please contact your student's school or teacher about any of these changes. We are looking forward to working with your student and with you this year. Thank you for being a part of the Medford Schools community where we are focused on successful students today and successful citizens tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Todd P. Bloomquist