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1. Introduction & Core Values and Beliefs

The Proficiency Based Learning Family Guide is intended to educate members of our school community of the tenets and practices associated with proficiency-based learning at Freeport High School. These guidelines coupled with effective collaboration throughout our school will assure the implementation of high quality proficiency-based learning practices that align to our FHS Core Values and Beliefs (see below). Our frameworks are aligned to state and national academic standards and identify the essential skills and understandings that all students must be able to demonstrate.

Our system is designed to do the following:

- Measure and accurately reflect student proficiency;
- Use high quality feedback to support the learning process and encourage student success;
- Assess and report academic achievement and learner behaviors separately;
- Use a common lens to accurately, consistently, and fairly score the quality of student work;
- Provide opportunities for students to engage in relearning and reassessment;
- Provide meaningful achievement information to students, parents, and institutions of higher learning.

Freeport High School Core Values and Beliefs

Mission

Freeport High School is committed to integrity, community, perseverance, and creativity. We celebrate individuality and empower students to achieve their highest personal aspirations in the pursuit of excellence.

Values

We value Integrity

- Those with integrity treat others and themselves with respect, honesty, kindness, and fairness.

We value Community

- Those who value community embrace relationships, celebrate diversity, display empathy, and nurture well-being

We value Perseverance

- Those who persevere take ownership of their learning, embrace challenge, and aspire to achieve their potential in the face of difficulties.

We value Creativity

- Those who are creative engage their world with a spirit of curiosity, take risks, and approach problem solving in innovative ways.
Beliefs about learning

**Learner-centered**
We believe that when we take responsibility for our learning, we are empowered to become collaborative learners who are proficient at seeking support and are self-directed.

**Critical thinkers**
We believe that when we examine a problem or challenge from multiple perspectives with an open mind and a questioning spirit, we are able to enrich our understanding of the world.

**Effective communicators**
We believe that when we articulate our thoughts and listen actively, we are able to effectively engage others, collaborate within our community, and reflect on our strengths and weaknesses.

**Problem solvers**
We believe that when we take initiative, use a variety of approaches and strategies, and learn from both our successes and failures, we are able to solve complex and important problems.
2. Proficiency-Based Learning and FHS

What is Proficiency-Based Learning?

Proficiency-Based Learning refers to systems of instruction, assessment, grading, and academic reporting that are based on students demonstrating that they have learned the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn as they progress through their education.

In order for students to earn a high school diploma in the state of Maine, a student must demonstrate proficiency in the standards established by the state. At Freeport High School these standards come from the Maine Learning Results, The Common Core, and Maine’s Guiding Principles. No matter where they come from, standards serve as descriptions of what students are expected to know and be able to do. For students to be proficient they must score a 3.0 or higher on the standards by the end of the year. In order to graduate from FHS students must meet proficiency in all the standards and meet all the graduation requirements set forth by RSU 5 school board. These include earning 22 credits. For students to earn a credit they must demonstrate proficiency in the standards measured in that course.

Why is Freeport High School shifting to a proficiency-based learning model?

The 21st century has proven to be a dynamic time. In the “Information Age” economy and innovation driven society, students must be prepared with skills to be successful in a highly competitive and rapidly changing global job market. The knowledge and skills that students will have to demonstrate before they graduate from FHS will prepare them for that reality. Furthermore, proficiency-based learning is a way of teaching, learning, and assessing that great schools and great educators have been doing for a long time. At FHS proficiency-based learning is about:

- **Clarifying** what students need to know and be able to do
- **Clarifying** what proficiency looks like for every standard
- **Supporting** all students
  - Creating plans for those that don’t demonstrate proficiency
  - Extending learning for those that are already proficient
- **Developing skills** that will lead to success in the 21st century
3. Graduation Requirements

What are Freeport High School’s graduation requirements?

Starting with the Class of 2021 all students must demonstrate that they have achieved proficiency in each and every standard for each content area. A student gains a credit in a course when the student has demonstrated proficiency in all standards associated with that particular class.

Freeport High’s School graduation requirements include:

- English Language Arts (4 Credits)
- Mathematics (4 Credits)
- Social Studies (3 Credits)
- Science and Technology (4 Credits)
- Health and Physical Education (1.5 Credits)
- Visual & Performing Arts (1 Credit)
- World Languages (1 Credit)
- Electives (5.5 Credits)

How will students and parents know what must be demonstrated in content area standards to graduate?

All content area classes have identified standards and performance indicators necessary to demonstrate proficiency. Each standard has three to eight performance indicators tied to that particular standard. Students are scored at the performance indicator level and all performance indicators are averaged to reach a score at the standard level. Each performance indicator is accompanied by a written rubric that communicates how students demonstrate proficiency. These written rubrics are called scoring criteria. Scoring criteria will be used to score assessments and determine a student’s level of progress or proficiency on each performance indicator.
4. Grading and Assessments

How will students be assessed in both the content area standards & the school wide expectations?

In a proficiency-based learning model, a student’s content area grade is determined from assessments of the content-based standards. There are two types of assessments:

**Formative Assessments**

Formative assessments are opportunities for students to practice and receive feedback on their learning. Examples of formative assessments include class work, homework, and quizzes. They typically assess progress towards proficiency and can be broadly described as a snapshot measure that captures a student’s progress in the learning process. It explains to what extent a student is learning a concept, skill or a knowledge set.

**Summative assessments**

Summative assessments determine proficiency. They are comprehensive measures of a student’s ability to demonstrate the concepts, skill, and knowledge embedded in standards. It is the assessment of learning. Examples of summative assessments include research projects, presentations, labs, writings, tests, and other performance tasks. At Freeport High School each summative assessment is linked to at least one content area standard and/or a school wide expectation.

One way to think about the difference between formative and summative assessment is to liken them to athletics or performing arts. A soccer team, for example, practices and scrimmages (formative assessments) to prepare for the games (summative assessments). A drama production has multiple rehearsals (formative assessments) prior to the actual show (summative assessment).
Students will also be assessed for Habits of Work. Habits of Work are an essential part of a student’s success in high school and beyond. There is a clear correlation between quality Habits of Work, academic achievement and learning. Strong Habits of Work almost always result in high levels of learning and achievement and solid Habits of Work prepare students well for college and career endeavors. Habits of Work are reported separately in each course of study at least every two weeks. (see section 5)

*Habits of Work* are derived directly from a set of standards known as **Maine’s Guiding Principles**. All schools in Maine are required to certify their students have the skills necessary to be successful in the 21st century world. These standards include being a:

- Clear and Effective Communicator
- Self-directed and Lifelong Learner
- Creative and Practical Problem Solver
- Responsible and Involved Citizen
- Integrative and informed Thinker

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**What is the grading scale that teachers will use?**

For the class of 2021 and beyond FHS will employ a four-point grading scale when grading assessments. For each standard, teachers develop scoring criteria rubrics that make clear the criteria that a student will have to meet in order to receive a proficient grade. The chart below defines the grade scale.

**FHS Grade Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proficiency Level</th>
<th>Designation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Distinguished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Exceeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Approaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Insufficient Evidence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Can a student retake an assessment?

In our school, students can earn opportunities for reassessment. A student will have the option to request to retake or revise a summative assessment if s/he is not satisfied with the grade. In order to request a reassessment opportunity, the student’s first attempt must have demonstrated an initial good faith effort in both the content standards and Habits of Work. A student must make a request to the teacher within 48 hours of receiving the scored assessment that s/he will retake or revise. Students are expected to complete the reassessment process, including any tasks assigned by the teacher prior to the reassessment, within two weeks of notifying the teacher. This process is called “48/2” (48 hours to notify the teacher and two weeks to reassess or revise). Extensions to the “48/2” rule will be made at the discretion of the teacher. All tasks associated with the relearning process are at the discretion of the teacher.
5. Habits of Work

Why are Habits of Work reported?

At FHS we believe that a student’s success and achievement is closely related to a strong work ethic, persistence, reflection and other positive classroom behaviors. Habits of Work grades reflect the belief that students can develop behaviors, which support their own academic and interpersonal growth.

What are the Habits of Work criteria and where do they come from?

The Three Habits of Work Criteria

Preparedness
- Timeliness
- Organization
- Homework completion

Engagement
- Participation
- Interpersonal Involvement
- Group work

Determination
- Ability to self assess
- Persistence
- Effective use of feedback

This criteria was developed by our own staff and is similar to the criteria used in other RSU5 schools. It was developed based on the Maine Guiding Principles and addresses what we feel are some critical life and school skills for our students.
How will Habits of Work be graded and reported?

In each content area class students will receive a Habits of Work grade separate from their content area grade. These will be reported at least every two weeks. Habits of Work grades will appear on quarterly grade reports and final transcripts.

How will students learn about Habits of Work?

At the beginning of each course, teachers will clarify with students what the Habits of Work will look like in a particular classroom or content area. Preparedness, for example, will look different in a math class than in a performing arts class.

What else is important to know about Habits of Work at FHS?

Habits of Work are tied to many other elements of life at FHS. These grades impact:

- Co-curricular eligibility (see section 6)
- Ability to reassess their content area work
- Ability to earn the right for junior/senior privileges such as open campus and late arrival.
6. Co-curricular Eligibility

What score do students have to maintain to remain eligible for co-curricular activities?

For students to remain eligible they must maintain an average score of at least 2.0 on all standards in all classes and must maintain an average score of at least a 2.5 in Habits of Work in all classes. Students must demonstrate that they are putting forth effort toward reaching proficiency in their courses in order to maintain eligibility for co-curriculars.

What happens if a student falls below the eligibility criteria?

Students who have below a 2.0 in any standard or have a Habits of Work score below a 2.5 in any class will be placed on academic probation. While on academic probation, the student will NOT be eligible to participate in games/meets/contests/performances, but is still expected to practice and abide by existing school/team/club/activity rules and regulations. Students are expected to attend, but may not dress in uniform for games/meets/contests/performances. Students are also expected to see the teacher for extra help.

How long are students placed on academic probation?

Once placed on academic probation, the student’s eligibility status will be determined on a week-to-week basis. Academic probation will last a minimum of one week to a maximum of three weeks. After one week of probation, a student can resume playing as soon as both the academic score is raised to a 2.0 in all standards and the Habits of Work score is raised to a 2.5.
What happens if the student does not improve their score?

After the third week of academic probation, if the student’s score has not been brought up to a 2.0 in the academic standards and a 2.5 in Habits of Work, the student will be placed on academic suspension. While on academic suspension, students are ineligible, and may not participate in any team/activity/club activities in any form. Students may not practice, attend practice, participate in games / meets / contests / performances, travel to away events on the team bus, sit with the team on the bench, or attend any team functions.

How often is the eligibility status reviewed?

Once placed on academic suspension, the student’s eligibility status will be determined on a week-to-week basis. If, after a FULL week of academic suspension, a student has brought his/her score to a 2.0 for the academic standards and a 2.5 for Habits of Work, the student will be removed from academic suspension and may return to full participation for all team/club activities.

How is eligibility determined from one school year to the next?

Students who received a 2.0 or lower for the academic standards and a 2.5 or lower for Habits of Work in the fourth quarter will be placed on academic warning at the beginning of the new school year. If, at the end of the first full three weeks of school, the student has below a 2.0 in an academic standard or a 2.5 in Habits of Work, the student will be placed on academic probation. The same probation and suspension processes outlined above will be followed.

Please see the FHS Athletic Handbook for details about the academic probation process.
7. Post-Secondary Planning

Proficiency-based learning is not new. The principles of PBL are grounded in research-based best teaching practices, and there is no disputing that students who are held to high standards in a PBL system learn deeply and are more able to apply that learning to their future educational endeavors. All stakeholders - educators, parents, business leaders, and elected officials - recognize that high educational standards, strong academic preparation, and well-developed inter/intrapersonal skills are essential to success in today’s world.

More and more colleges and universities are endorsing PBL and recognize that graduates of a high school where PBL is employed are well prepared to be successful in college and career. The FHS transcript will reflect the 1-4 scale for academic standards and Habits of Work as described in this guide. Colleges are very familiar with this scale. In fact most colleges use their own 1-4 scales.

Some have suggested that colleges may have a difficult time interpreting a PBL high school transcript for admissions purposes. That is simply not true. The finest US colleges, private and public, interpret public and private high school transcripts from students all over the world. FHS knows with confidence that college admissions counselors look favorably on the PBL transcript. FHS’s transcript will carefully reflect the deep learning as well as the expanded learning opportunities that each student has experienced during his/her high school years. In fact, we believe that a detailed PBL transcript will give college applicants a leg up during the college admissions process.

Please feel free to use the links below for further research-based information about college and universities stance on proficiency-based learning and transcripts:

College admissions
Surveys of College Educators & Employers
8. Glossary

*Formative Assessment:* snapshot measure that captures a student’s progress in the learning process. In other words, formative assessments are often said to be for learning, while summative assessments are of learning.

*Guiding Principles:* competencies valuable for today’s world: Clear and effective communicator, Self-Directed and Lifelong Learner, Creative and Practical Problem Solver, Responsible and Involved Citizen, Integrative and Informed Thinker

*Habits of Work:* identified traits or behaviors that promote and are essential to learning. These traits or behaviors are assessed separate from academic learning.

*Learning Targets:* day to day learning objectives

*Performance Indicators:* demonstration of learning students will do to meet the standard; measurable. Performance indicators provide more specific descriptions of what it means to meet a content area standard. Usually, when students engage in a summative assessment aligned with a particular standard, it is at the performance indicator level against which they are assessed.

*Proficiency:* demonstration of student performance on each performance indicator of a standard against detailed scoring criteria.

*Proficiency-Based Learning:* systems of instruction, assessment, grading, and academic reporting that are based on students demonstrating that they have learned the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn as they progress through their education.

*Rubric:* an assessment tool used to define levels of proficiency.

*Scoring Criteria:* a set of descriptors of the various levels of proficiency for each performance indicator related to the standards.

*Standard:* broad statement of key learning that all students are expected to demonstrate

*Summative Assessment:* used to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period—typically at the end of a project, unit, course, semester, program, or school year; they are generally evaluative, rather than diagnostic.