

A decorative graphic on the right side of the page. It features three concentric circles in shades of blue, with the largest one at the top right, a smaller one in the middle, and another large one at the bottom right. Thin blue lines intersect these circles and extend across the page.

# Central High School Grading Guidelines

Updated 12/21/2018

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## **Introduction**

In 2009-10, Central High School formed a committee known as the Grading Team. The ultimate goal was to contemporize practices in an effort to help students reach their fullest potential. This team reviewed current grading practices in place at Central High School, surveyed parents, students and teachers and researched best grading practices. The research focused on practices that not only improved communications about student achievement to parents and other users of grading data, but also embraced practices that promoted greater student learning and retention of knowledge and skills.

## **Philosophy:**

The purpose for grading is to engage teachers and students in the process of assessing progress toward the acquisition of targeted knowledge and skills in order to inform future learning and instruction. The purpose for final course grades is to communicate to students, parents, teachers and other users of this data the level of competency a student has achieved as related to the knowledge and skills (learning targets) expected within a course.

## **Overview:**

The grading guidelines presented in this document were developed from extensive research on grading practices that promote and maximize student learning and increase communication about student achievement to students, parents, educators and other users of grading data. Research indicates:

- Grading practices need to be formative in the learning process. Feedback should be specific in terms of the strengths and weaknesses of student learning.
- Achievement grades should only represent mastery of the targeted knowledge and skills.
- Behavior, effort, and other life skills should be reported separately.
- Grading practices should be consistent amongst teachers of the same courses.
- Each letter grade in a grading scale should be near equal in weight.

Research further indicates the importance of differentiating between formative and summative assessment.

### **Formative Assessment:**

- Provides direction for improvement and/or adjustment to instruction for individual students or for the whole class.
- Gives clear descriptive feedback to students and teachers on the progress of learning.
  - Students: about their strengths and weaknesses and specific actions to improve.
  - Teachers: about the success of the instruction (lesson/activity).
- Provides practice prior to a summative assessment, giving students the opportunity to take risks for new learning without being penalized for mistakes.
- Generally should not be included in the calculation of grades.

Summative Assessment:

- Provides summative information to determine a student's proficiency of meeting learning targets.
- Summative assessment can only occur if the student is provided formative assessment.
- Are used in the calculation of grades.

### **Guideline 1: Grades Are Aligned To Learning Targets**

This guideline requires that grading procedures be aligned with the learning targets of the course. Teacher record keeping must; therefore, be organized by learning targets rather than assessment methods.

#### **A. Grades must be aligned to the learning targets for a course.**

Teachers are expected to communicate the objectives of a lesson and how the learning in the lesson aligns to a specific learning target or set of learning targets within the course. To do this with the greatest impact on student learning, teachers need to have a clear understanding of what learning results are expected. In addition, they must communicate those expectations in a student friendly manner. Learning targets for a course are recorded in the Eclipse Curriculum Manager. Courses with multiple sections and/or teachers must have consistent learning targets and grading practices.

#### **B. Grades in the grade book are organized by learning targets and not by the type of assessment.**

Teachers will organize student grades by learning targets, otherwise known in Infinite Campus as "grading buckets". Grades are not to be organized by the type of assignment such as tests, quizzes, projects, etc. The only exception is for those courses whose instructors choose to use the optional homework category as part of the achievement grade. Courses with multiple sections and/or teachers must have the same grade book set-up (categories/buckets/percentages/weighting). The figure below provides an example of grades organized by learning targets.

### **Guideline 2: Each Course Will Report Two Grades – Academic Achievement & Life Skills**

This guideline acknowledges that it is important to communicate both academic achievement and behavior type skills, which are called life skills.

#### **A. Academic achievement and life skills are reported separately.**

An academic achievement grade is defined as the degree of mastery a student has achieved as related to the knowledge and skills (learning targets) expected within a course.

Hard work (effort); frequent involvement in class discussions or other activities (participation); turning in assignments on-time and following directions (responsibility); and a friendly, happy demeanor (attitude) are all highly valued attributes that contribute toward academic success. Unless these attributes are part of the standards of a subject and are included as the learning targets that must be demonstrated to be proficient, they should not be included in the academic achievement grade.

#### **B. The grading of life skills attributes will be done using a rubric**

- See page 17 for the Life Skills Rubric
- Life skills will be reported every six weeks and will reflect behaviors for the six week period only. Another word, a life skills grade will be given at the six week progress report and again

- at twelve and eighteen weeks. The twelve week report, for example, will be for weeks seven through twelve rather than a cumulative grade for weeks one through twelve.
- Life skill grades will not factor into GPA or be included on the student's transcript.

### **Guideline 3: Academic Achievement Grades Reflect the Degree of Mastery of Course Learning Targets**

This guideline supports learning and encourages student success by ensuring that students understand the performance standards for mastery of the learning targets.

#### **A. Grades must come from clear descriptions of performance standards.**

In this guideline, a performance standard is defined as the level of understanding or skill a student has to have or demonstrate in order to be considered proficient. Central High School's grading scale defines proficient as being able to achieve a grade of "C-" or better. Guideline 5 will provide more detail regarding the grading scale. However, for the purpose of this guideline, teachers, as the experts in a subject area, will collectively use their knowledge to define the criteria that describes the levels of proficiency for a given learning target.

The following table explains the general difference in student performance within the letter grade ranges. Students receive information regarding expectations for grades in each course syllabus.

<b>Grade Range</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>A</b>	Students earning grades within the "A" range demonstrate proficiency <u>and</u> consistently exceed the standard.
<b>B</b>	Students earning grades within the "B" range demonstrate proficiency <u>and</u> at times exceed the standard.
<b>C</b>	Students earning grades within the "C" range demonstrate a proficient level of mastery of the targeted knowledge and skills.
<b>F</b>	Students receiving an "F" have not met the expectations for demonstrating the knowledge and skills as indicated by the learning targets within that course.

#### **B. The academic achievement grade is derived primarily from a variety of summative assessments aligned to the learning targets of a course.**

The term assessment is being used loosely, it should not be thought of as an exam, but rather it represents a variety of classroom activities that provide information on student learning.

#### **C. Teachers of a given course may choose to include an optional homework category to be factored in as part of the achievement grade.**

- There must be grading consistency across all sections of a course.
- To help ease the transition for ninth graders, freshmen courses may elect to count homework as 20% of the final course grade.
- For non-freshmen courses, teachers may elect to count homework as 12% of the final grade.

**Guideline 4: Within The Grading Period, If More Current Assessment Data Demonstrates Greater Achievement Of A Previously Scored Learning Target, The Previous Score May Be Exempted.**

This guideline emphasizes “grading in pencil”. That is, learning is an on-going process, and what matters is how much learning has occurred and not when it occurs. This guideline honors individual differences by recognizing that students learn at different rates and do not always perform at their “real level” on their first attempt, in a set time, or on one method of assessment.

**A. Grades should reflect the most recent evidence of the level of achievement for the learning targets within the course.**

Teachers are encouraged and expected to modify a student’s grade if more recent information provides a more accurate picture of student achievement than a previously recorded grade within the marking period.

**B. Teachers are expected to incorporate a variety of assessment methods within their course and provide opportunities for reassessment.**

Teachers must provide a variety of ways students can demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Students will be provided with opportunities for reassessment at the teacher’s discretion provided they meet criteria.

Reassessment includes an “opportunity-cost” factor. Since reassessment will contribute fully toward the student’s grade, there should be factors that make doing well the first time the goal.

**Criteria for Re-assessment:**

1. Students must complete all homework and other formative assignments prior to the first summative assessment.
2. Students are required to provide evidence that they have taken actions for improved understanding and corrections as teacher directed.
3. Reassessment must be completed within an acceptable time frame as defined by the teacher.

**C. Grading is semester based.**

Awarding credit for a course occurs at the semester when a student has earned a passing grade. During the 18-week semester, there will be two “progress-monitoring” points – one at 6 weeks and the other at 12 weeks. Teachers will report both an academic and life skills grade for students in their course. Grades from these progress-monitoring dates will be used in the determination of eligibility for extra-curricular activities or privilege programs.

## **Guideline 5: Crunching Numbers - Calculating Grades**

This guideline emphasizes the importance of establishing a grading plan which explains how a student's grade will be determined.

### **A. Teachers provide a "grading plan" as a component of the course syllabus at the start of each year, for year-long courses or semester for semester courses.**

Students must understand upfront how their grades will be calculated. This information must be included on the course syllabus and explained thoroughly. Courses with multiple sections/teachers must use the same grading plan.

The following items must be included in the grading plan, which is part of the universal course syllabus.

#### **1. Organization and Weight of Grading Buckets**

The grading plan must include how grades will be organized in the grade book as well as the weight that each "grading bucket" contributes to the overall calculation of the final achievement grade. The organization of grades must be done by learning targets and not assessment types. Exception – see Guideline 3, part C.

#### **2. Semester Exams (Finals).**

All courses include a cumulative final exam, given at the end of each semester. This exam contribute 15% to the overall course grade.

#### **3. Non-negotiable**

A non-negotiable requirement is work deemed necessary to determine the student's level of mastery of a specific learning target within a course. A course grade cannot be assigned without completion of this requirement. If a non-negotiable requirement is not completed, the teacher will notify the student and parent of a final due date for that requirement. Failure to meet the non-negotiable requirement by the due date will result in course failure.

#### **4. Opportunities for Re-assessments**

Teachers will provide students with opportunities for reassessment. The grading plan will explain the criteria for reassessment.

#### **5. Relearning vs. Extra Credit**

Extra-credit is not allowed. Students may have the opportunity to improve their academic achievement through reassessment options.

### **B. Central High School utilizes an equal-interval grading scale.**

The following scale is used to calculate grades. This scale provides an equal interval point distribution based on percentage or rubric score. Teachers enter the percentage correct or a rubric score into the grade book for each task. A teacher may use both percentage and rubric scores within their grade book.



### **"Missing", "Zero", or "0" in the gradebook**

**1. Student does not complete the graded task, but it WILL BE accepted later:**

- a. Enter "M" which shows up in the grade book as "Missing" and calculates at 0%. Put a final date of acceptance in the comments. No comment will indicate it will be accepted at any time, through the end of the semester.

**2. Student does not complete the graded work and it is NOT accepted late.**

- a. Enter "Zero", which calculates as 0% with the comment "missing, not accepted late"

**OR**

- b. Enter "M" with the comment "missing, not accepted late"

**3. Student gets everything wrong on the graded task**

- a. Enter "0" which calculates to a 0%

**4. Student turns in poorly produced work that does not meet the minimal effort standards. (A statement regarding non-acceptance of poorly produced work should be included in course syllabus)**

- a. **If you want to give the student a second opportunity,** enter "M" with the comment "did not meet acceptable standards, due by XX"

**OR**

- b. **If student does not get a second chance,** enter "zero" with the comment "did not meet acceptable standards". As staff, we know a "Zero" means work turned in that did not meet standards, but for the parent that may not be clear, so I am asking the addition of this comment for clarification.

## Grading Scale And Corresponding Value Used To Calculate The Grade.

Grade	Percent Correct on Task	Value used to calculate based on rubric or percent correct	Rubric Score Task
<b>A</b>	100	100	<b>4.0</b>
	99	99	<b>3.9</b>
	98	98	<b>3.8</b>
	97	97	<b>3.7</b>
	96		
	95	95	<b>3.6</b>
	94	94	<b>3.5</b>
	93	93	<b>3.4</b>
<b>A-</b>	92	92	<b>3.3</b>
	91		
	90	90	<b>3.2</b>
<b>B+</b>	89	89	<b>3.1</b>
	88	88	<b>3.0</b>
	87	87	<b>2.9</b>
<b>B</b>	86		
	85	85	<b>2.8</b>
	84	84	<b>2.7</b>
	83	83	<b>2.6</b>
<b>B-</b>	82	82	<b>2.5</b>
	81		
	80	80	<b>2.4</b>

Grade	Percent Correct on Task	Value used to calculate based on rubric or percent correct	Rubric Score Task
<b>C+</b>	79	79	<b>2.3</b>
	78	78	<b>2.2</b>
	77	77	<b>2.1</b>
<b>C</b>	76		
	75	75	<b>2.0</b>
	74	74	<b>1.9</b>
	73	73	<b>1.8</b>
<b>C-</b>	72	72	<b>1.7</b>
	71		
	70	70	<b>1.6</b>
<b>F</b>	66-69	69	<b>1.5</b>
	61-65	68	<b>1.4</b>
	57-60	66	<b>1.3</b>
	52-56	65	<b>1.2</b>
	48-51	64	<b>1.1</b>
	43-47	63	<b>1.0</b>
	39-42	61	<b>0.9</b>
	34-38	60	<b>0.8</b>
	30-33	59	<b>0.7</b>
	25-29	58	<b>0.6</b>
	21-24	56	<b>0.5</b>
	16-20	55	<b>0.4</b>
	12-15	54	<b>0.3</b>
	7-11	53	<b>0.2</b>
	1-6	51	<b>0.1</b>
	0 (All wrong)	0	0 (All wrong)
	M (Missing)	0	Able to make up by date listed or if no date, the end of the semester.
	Zero	0	Not acceptable work or Missing and not able to make up

**C. Central High School has adopted the following grade points for the grading scale.**

<b>Grade Points</b>	<b><u>New</u> Grading Scale</b>
4.00	A
3.67	A-
3.33	B+
3.00	B
2.67	B-
2.33	C+
2.00	C
1.67	C-
0.00	F

A student's Grade Point Average (GPA) is determined by assigning grade points (based on the scale shown) for each course Achievement grade, adding those points, and then dividing by the total number of courses.

**Guideline 6: High Quality Assessment Practices**

This guideline supports learning and encourages student success by ensuring that each student's grade comes from accurate assessments. It is essential that teachers know, understand, and apply quality standards when they plan and implement assessment in their classroom.

**A. Assessments have a clear purpose**

The teacher must begin with a clear picture of why he or she is conducting the assessment. Who will use the results to inform what decisions? The assessor might use the assessment formatively—as practice or to inform students about their own progress—or summatively—to feed results into the grade book. In the case of summative tests, the reason for assessing is to document mastery of standards and measure achievement status at a point in time.

**B. Assessments are aligned to the learning goals.**

The teacher needs to clearly articulate what achievement goals he or she intends to measure. Teachers implementing this quality assessment standard create an assessment blueprint, which matches the achievement learning goals of the course with appropriate assessment methods. All learning goals can be categorized into four general categories. The four general categories of learning goals are:

- Knowledge goals are the facts and concepts we want students to know. In math, a knowledge target might be to recognize and describe patterns.
- Reasoning goals require students to use their knowledge to reason and problem solve. A reasoning target in math might be to use statistical methods to describe, analyze, and evaluate data.

- Performance skill goals ask students to use knowledge to perform or demonstrate a specific skill, such as reading aloud with fluency.
- Product goals specify that students will create something, such as a personal health-related fitness plan.

### **C. Assessments are of sound design**

This ensures that the teacher has translated the learning goals into assessments that will yield accurate results. It calls attention to the proper assessment method and to the importance of minimizing any bias that might distort student learning.

Teachers have choices in the assessment methods they use, including selected-response formats, extended written response, performance assessment, and personal communication. Selecting an assessment method that is incapable of reflecting the intended learning will compromise the accuracy of the results. For example, if the teacher wants to assess knowledge mastery of a certain item, both selected-response and extended written response methods are good matches, whereas performance assessment or personal communication may be less effective and too time-consuming. The chart that follows, clarifies which assessment methods are most likely to produce accurate results for different learning targets.

Bias can also creep into assessments and erode accurate results. Examples of bias include poorly printed test forms, noise distractions, vague directions, and cultural insensitivity. Teachers can minimize bias in a number of ways. For example, to ensure accuracy in selected-response assessment formats, they should keep wording simple and focused, aim for the lowest possible reading level, avoid providing clues or making the correct answer obvious, and highlight crucial words (for instance, *most*, *least*, *except*, *not*).

**Choosing the Right Assessment Method – This is a general guideline.**

<b>LEARNING TARGET</b>	<b>ASSESSMENT METHOD</b>			
	<b>Selected Response</b>	<b>Extended Written Response</b>	<b>Performance Assessment</b>	<b>Personal Communication</b>
<b>Knowledge Mastery</b>	Good match for assessing mastery of elements of knowledge.	Good match for tapping understanding of relationships among elements of knowledge.	Not a good match—too time-consuming to cover everything.	Can be used if assessor asks questions, evaluates answers, and infers mastery—but a time-consuming option.
<b>Reasoning Proficiency</b>	Good match only for assessing understanding of some patterns of reasoning out of context.	Written descriptions of complex problem solutions can provide a window into reasoning proficiency.	Assessor can watch students solve some problems and infer their reasoning proficiency.	Can be used if assessor asks student to "think aloud" or asks follow-up questions to probe reasoning.
<b>Skills</b>	Not a good match. Can assess mastery of the knowledge the students need to perform the skill well, but cannot measure the skill itself.		Good match. Assessor can observe and evaluate skills as they are being performed.	Strong match when skill is oral communication proficiency; not a good match otherwise.
<b>Ability to Create Products</b>	Not a good match. Can assess mastery of the knowledge students need to create quality products, but cannot assess the quality of products themselves.	Strong match only when the product is written. Not a good match when the product is not written.	Good match. Can assess the attributes of the product itself.	Not a good match.
Source: Adapted from <i>Classroom Assessment for Student Learning: Doing It Right—Using It Well</i> By R. Stiggins, J. Arter, J. Chappuis, and S. Chappuis, 2006, Portland, OR: ETS Assessment Training Institute. Copyright © 2006 by ETS. Reprinted with permission.				

**D. The assessments, whether formative or summative, are processed and if recorded in the grade book, are done so in a timely manner.**

Formative assessments that are collected should be returned with feedback in a timely fashion so as to assure students learn from the practice and can apply it to an assessment that will be graded and placed in the grade book. Like formative assessments, summative assessments, also need to be processed in a timely manner including the recording of the score in the grade book.

***It is expected that teachers enter scores in the grade book within 5 days of the assessment.*** If the assessment is a large project or paper, it is acceptable to mark in the grade book that the assessment was collected with the scores being added up to 10 days later.

Each semester, academic eligibility checks for students in athletics and extra-curricular activities will begin on the first Thursday following 20 school days and every Thursday after that until the end of the semester. ***It is expected that all staff have their gradebooks up-to-date by 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday before each grade check is scheduled to occur.*** This expectation ensures the most accurate data is used to determine student eligibility. If parents question academic eligibility, the principal/athletic director will refer them to the classroom teacher to discuss where the ineligibility issues lie.

**E. Assessment data is analyzed and used to inform teachers not only about student achievement, but also serves to provide information about the alignment of curriculum and effective instructional practices.**

In order for student assessment information to improve curriculum, instruction, and student learning, accurate analysis of assessment results is essential. It is expected that teachers take time (individually and collectively) to analyze the data and draw appropriate conclusions. Below is a list of inquiry questions when reviewing assessment data. While not inclusive, they do provide a baseline for analysis.

1. Did students meet learning targets?
2. How effective were curriculum and instruction in helping students to meet the learning targets. (tight alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment)
3. Were students provided opportunities for practice and given explicit feedback regarding the learning targets?
4. Is there evidence of improvement in instructional practices?
5. How do our students compare to other students in the same course but different sections?
6. How do our students compare to other students in the state, nation?
7. Is student achievement improving?
8. Are our students doing as well as they can?
9. What are our students' relative strengths & weaknesses?
10. Are we getting the most for our investment of time, effort, money, etc?

**Guideline 7: Involving Students In Grading And Assessment**

This guideline emphasizes the importance of students becoming involved in the assessment process. When students understand how they will be assessed, and especially when they have been involved in assessment decisions, the likelihood of student success is increased greatly. Involving students is at the heart of the shift from assessment that measures learning to assessment that promotes learning.

**A. Teachers are expected to ensure that students understand how their assessment grades will be determined.**

Students must understand how they will demonstrate their competence and the criteria for acceptable performance. To help students understand how they will demonstrate competence, a teacher can select the assessment, involve students in the development of an assessment activity, or provide students with choices for assessment. In any case, it is critical for students to understand the criteria for acceptable performance prior to the assessment. Teachers can set the criteria for their students or with their students. Criteria must be clearly spelled out using a marking scheme, checklist, or fully developed rubric. When students are involved in developing the criteria, they are more likely to understand what is expected of them and to perform to expectations.

**B. Teachers are expected to involve students in *Assessment As Learning*.**

Assessment As Learning is defined as the use of ongoing self-assessment by students in order to monitor their own learning, which is characterized by students reflecting on their own learning and making adjustments so they achieve deeper understanding. Teachers are expected to engage students in reflection, self and peer feedback, progress monitoring, and communicating their achievement and progress.

**Guideline 8: Accommodations and Modifications**

With a high-quality grading system in place, schools can develop fair and accurate procedures for reporting the achievement of exceptional learners.

- A five step model, described below, will be used to determine if the student is graded using the standard grading scale or a modified grading scale.
- Students needing only accommodations to meet the learning targets will be graded using the standard grading scale.
- Students needing modifications to the learning targets will use the pass/fail grading scale. Use of a modified scale must be indicated in the student's IEP, 504, or PEP.

**5-Step Model for Grading Students with Unique Needs**

*Designed by Lee Ann Jung and Thomas Guskey, Educational Leadership, February 2010, pages 31-35*

**Step 1: Ask whether the learning target is an appropriate expectation without adaptations.**

For each learning target, the key question is: Can we expect the student to achieve this learning target without special support or changes to the target? If the answer is yes, then no change in the grading process is needed, and the teacher grades the student with the same "ruler" he or she would use with any other student in the class.

However, some exceptional learners may not achieve certain course expectations without special services and supports. When an instructional team (classroom teacher and special education teacher) determines that the student will not be able to achieve a particular expectation without special support, they move to step 2.

**Step 2: If the standard is not appropriate, determine what type of adaptation the learning target needs.**

For each learning target that will require support, the instructional team asks; Which is needed—accommodation or modification?

*Accommodation* means that the content of the standard remains the same, but the method for demonstrating mastery of that content may be adjusted. For example, a student may require an audiotape of lectures because of difficulty in taking notes. In addition, he or she might need to take end-of-unit assessments orally. Although the format for answering questions would be different, the content of the questions would remain the same, and the student would be judged, like all other students, on the content of his or her responses.

*Modification*, in contrast, means changing the learning target or level of expectation of performance itself. For some students with special needs, they may not be ready to work on the learning targets for a course at the expected level; however they should be expected to work on related learning goals at a lower, but appropriate level.

If the instructional team determines that a student needs only accommodations to reach a particular standard, then no change in the grading process is required. But if modifications are deemed necessary, the team goes through the remaining three steps of the model for this standard.

**Step 3: If the standard needs modification, determine the appropriate standard.**

The classroom teacher along with the student's special education instructor will determine the learning targets the student could reasonably achieve by the end of the course with special supports.

**Step 4: Base grades on the modified standard, not the grade-level standard.**

It would be futile to grade a student on an academic standard everyone agrees the student will probably not meet. Instead, the student should be graded on the learning targets deemed appropriate using an alternative grading scale of pass or fail. The use of an alternative grading scale of pass or fail must be communicated in the student's IEP.

**Step 5: Communicate the meaning of the grade.**

Finally, the report card should include a special notation, such as an asterisk beside the grade that reflects achievement based on modified standards. The accompanying footnote might be worded, "based on modified standards."





NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

### SCORING GUIDE & SELF-EVALUATION

In determination of the life skills rating for each area, all attributes for the area are considered equally.

#### Ratings:

**USUALLY**  
(Very few exceptions)

**SOMETIMES**

**SELDOM**  
(Not acceptable)

(GOAL)

#### Respect & Responsibility

- I attend class daily, missing only when I have an acceptable excuse.
- I am at class on time, with all required materials.
- I demonstrate integrity & ethical behavior.
- I follow classroom expectations.
- I demonstrate behavior that sets good examples and positively impacts class.
- I use electronic devices appropriately, following the expectations of the classroom teacher.

Rating:

Reflection: \_\_\_\_\_

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#### Communication and Collaboration

- I actively listen while others share their ideas and positively contribute to the discussion.
- I communicate effectively and respectfully both online & face-to-face.
- I share responsibility for collaborative work and value the individual contributions made by each team member.

Rating:

Reflection: \_\_\_\_\_

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#### Productivity and Accountability

- I complete assignments and meet established deadlines.
- I hand in work that represents my best ability.
- I am resourceful and seek help when needed.
- I demonstrate self-initiative, staying on task, and managing my work time wisely.

Rating:

Reflection: \_\_\_\_\_

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