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Michael Scott
St. Cloud State University

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Study of Select Secondary School Principals' Perceptions of Standards-Based Grading Implementation in Minnesota Secondary Schools

by

Michael David Scott

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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Dissertation Committee:
Kay Worner, Chairperson
Roger Worner
Plamen Miltenoff
John Eller

Abstract

According to Guskey and Bailey (2010), the first release of educational standards occurred in 1989 from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (p. 14). Subsequent to the focus on educational standards, educational researchers published foundational recommendations and guidelines to support the implementation and use of standards-based grading (Heflebower, Hoegh, & Warrick, 2014; Guskey, 2009a; Guskey & Bailey, 2010; Marzano, 2010; Marzano & Kendall, 1996a; Nagel, 2015; O'Connor, 2009). However, limited research was found indicating barriers to the implementation or successful use of standards-based grading in Minnesota secondary schools (grades 7-12).

The purpose of the study was to examine the reported level of implementation of standards-based grading in select Minnesota secondary schools (grades 7-12) and the benefits and barriers to implementation. The researcher surveyed Minnesota public school principals who served secondary schools.

The mixed-methods study examined select Minnesota secondary schools' (including grades 7-12) implementation of standards-based grading, those strategies that caused implementation to be successful, and principals' perceived benefits of standards-based grading implementation. In addition, the study examined Minnesota secondary school principals' perceptions of barriers to implementation of standards-based grading for secondary schools.

The study's findings indicated a lack of implementation of standards-based grading in the participants' secondary schools. Only 9.7% of the participants indicated standards-based grading implementation had taken place or a formal process to implementation has been initiated. Yet, the study revealed the participants perceived standards-based grading as beneficial. However, the participants indicated agreement in a number of barriers to implementation of standards-based grading in secondary schools.

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Finally to ISD 423 Hutchinson School District, thank you for your confidence in me as an administrator and the support on this journey. My hope is to continue to build and support excellence in our district.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Introduction to the Study

When *A Nation at Risk* was published in 1983, the authors opined that schools in the United States were mediocre and therefore, "threatens our very future and Nation as a people" (http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/findings.html). The publication caused a reverberative effect on educational reform. Subsequently, legislation and educational programming were instituted, aimed at correcting the assertion that America's schools were failing to educate its students and keep pace educationally with other industrialized nations. The U.S. Department of Education (2008) reported that a primary element of concern addressed in *A Nation at Risk* was the need for educational standards in the core areas of English, math, social studies and science (p. 3).

According to Guskey and Bailey (2010), the first release of a set of educational standards occurred in 1989 from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Soon thereafter, the National Council for the Social Studies (1994), National Academy of Science (1996), National Council of Teachers of English (1996), and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (1996) established standards in their disciplines (p. 14). Moreover, in "Standards, Assessment, and Accountability," Shepard et al. (2009) stated that standards-based education and grading have been topics for over 30 years, gaining a permanent place in educational pedagogy with the authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1994 as well as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001. Shepard's report included a survey conducted in 2002 of educational policy makers that revealed standards "were acknowledged as central framework guiding state educational policy" (p. 1).

For over 25 years, educational standards for learning have been at the forefront of education reform (Guskey & Bailey, 2010; U.S Department of Education, 2008). According to Guskey and Bailey (2010), standards answer the questions about what students should learn, be able to do, and be able to create (pp. 13-14). Reporting grades in a standards-based format, particularly at the secondary school level, however, has not kept pace with standards-based educational reform in the development of standards-based grading systems (Guskey, 2009b; Heflebower et al., 2014). Guskey and Bailey (2010) affirmed, "While just about everyone today agrees that report cards need improvement and that grades should be based on clear standards for student learning, rarely do they agree on what those report cards should contain or how they should be constructed" (p. 1).

Statement of the Problem

Educational researchers have published foundational recommendations and guidelines to support the implementation and use of standards-based grading (Guskey, 2009a; Guskey & Bailey, 2010; Heflebower et al., 2014; Marzano, 2010; Marzano & Kendall, 1996b; Nagel, 2015; O'Connor, 2009). However, limited research was found revealing the barriers to implementation or successful use of standards-based grading in Minnesota secondary schools (grades 7-12).

The mixed-methods study examined select Minnesota secondary schools' (including grades 7-12) implementation of standards-based grading, principals' perceptions of those strategies that caused implementation to be successful, and principals' perceived benefits of standards-based grading implementation. In addition, the study examined select Minnesota secondary school principals' perceptions about school districts' barriers to initiate standards-based grading implementation plans.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the reported level of implementation of standards-based grading in select Minnesota secondary schools (grades 7-12) and perceived benefits and barriers to implementation. A paradox exists in that every state has adopted educational standards as benchmarks that students should achieve and be able to demonstrate, yet limited research has been found that states, Minnesota in particular, have adopted reporting schematics that detail students' achievement on these standards (Guskey & Bailey, 2010; O'Connor, 2009). Kentucky was one of the first states to develop and pilot a statewide, standards-based grading system at the secondary level (Guskey, 2011b, p. 53).

Even with teachers focusing on established standards, education researchers have stated that grades were not primarily reported to acknowledge that students had achieved an acceptable level of proficiency specifically and clearly aligned to the standards. Rather, grades were reported predominantly at the secondary school level on the basis of an amalgamation of factors such as tests, quizzes, daily work, attendance, and behavior with no clear indication to students, parents, teachers, or school systems on how well students had learned or performed on the standards (Nagel, 2015, p. 7; O'Connor, 2009, p. 21; Wiggins, 1994, p. 28). Thus, after teachers reported final grades, for example A's, B's, or C's, the grading reports may have continued to fail to reflect accurately to the students or the students' parents the students' knowledge or performance levels and hence, were of limited use (Trumbull, 2000b, p. 29; Wiggins, 2006, p. 90).

This inconsistency in educators' use of standards for student learning and the lack of research indicating grading on those standards to report students' performance support the need for further study of standards-based grading. The study may assist school leaders in their

implementation of standards-based grading and, moreover, assist school administrators, professors of education administration, and researchers create professional development programs or modules to guide school leaders in the design and implementation of successful standards-based grading systems.

Research Questions

1. What were the perceived barriers reported by select Minnesota secondary school principals in the implementation of a standards-based grading system in secondary schools?
2. What were the perceived benefits reported by select Minnesota secondary school principals in the implementation of a standards-based grading system in secondary schools?
3. What methods did select Minnesota secondary school principals perceive resulted in the successful implementation of a standards-based grading system in their secondary schools?
4. What recommendations did select Minnesota secondary school principals offer as strategies for the successful implementation of standards-based grading in their secondary schools?

Theoretical Framework

Educational researchers (Heflebower et al., 2014; Marzano, 2010; Nagel, 2015) have referenced the definition of standards-based grading by Wiggins (1993, 1996) as either standard-referenced grading or standards-based grading. The definitions are at times used interchangeably by educators. Standards are specific descriptions of "what students are to know and be able to do as a result of their experiences in school…describe particular elements

of content…what specific knowledge students are expected to acquire…and describe levels of performance in relation to that knowledge" (Guskey & Bailey, 2010, pp. 43-44).

According to Wiggins (1993, 1996), in a standards-referenced grading system, a teacher provides feedback and appraisal of a student's performance based on a set of standards. The student neither advances to a subsequent standard nor relearns the previous standard based on the evaluation. The student continues to the next level of learning regardless of how he or she performed. In a standards-based grading system, the teacher provides feedback and appraisal of a student's performance based on a set of standards, and the student may advance to a more challenging standard of learning or, if necessary, relearn the unlearned standard based on the teacher's feedback (as cited in Marzano, 2010, p. 18).

Marzano (2010) recommended, "Understanding the distinctions between standards-based and standards-referenced systems helps schools and districts design a grading system that meets their needs" (p. 19). Marzano concluded that with a district's use of a standards-referenced system or standards-based system, teachers provide an evaluative grade of student performance based on standards.

As cited in Marzano and Kendall (1996a), Mark Durm (1993) explained that the history of traditional grading involved the teacher providing a grade of A, B, C, D, or F based on a calculated average of the student's performance on assignments. This grading system was founded in 1897 at Mount Holyoke College and was a modified version of the Harvard University system which began in 1877 and involved the subdivision of grades into six categories called divisions (p. 14).

As described by Marzano (2010) in a standards-based or standards-referenced grading system, the teacher provides students with a summative score based on learning goals.

Teachers do not provide a comprehensive grade for a subject (such as an A or B in a traditional grading system); rather, the teacher reports whether or not the student achieved proficiency (the school district creates a scale defining what proficiency means) in each learning goal or standard (pp. 112-120).

Carr and Farr (2000) described teachers' assessment of a student's performance based on the district's standards of learning and then provided the student a proficiency mark of advanced, proficient, partial, or minimum based on the student's achievement of the standard (p. 191). Other examples of proficiency marks a district may employ include "exceed standard; meets standard; approaching standard; below standard" or "extending, acquiring, emerging, pre-emergent" or "distinguished; proficient, apprentice, novice" (Guskey & Bailey, 2010). O'Connor (2009) suggested that whatever descriptional words districts choose to use as marks they include clear definitions as to their meaning (p. 73).

In the National Education Goals Panel's (1993) report *Promises to Keep: Creating High Standards for American Students,* the authors used the term "performance standard," which Marzano (2010) reported was "popularized" following the publication of the National Education Goals Panel report (p. 17). The panel defined performance standard as "how good is good enough" in reference to the level of proficiency a student performed on a standard of learning. The panel further defined this major concept in standards-based grading:

> …they are the indices of quality that specify how adept or competent a student demonstration must be. A performance standard indicates both the nature of the evidence (such as an essay, mathematical proof, scientific experiment, project, exam, or combination of these) required to demonstrate that the content standard has been met and the quality of student performance that will be deemed acceptable (that merits

a passing or "A" grade). The Technical Planning Group believes that performance standards are essential to gauging whether content standards are met. (p. ii)

Hanover Research (2011) compiled common characteristics for a standards-based grading system that provided a comprehensive theoretical framework of a standards-based grading system:

- Students are graded either entirely or almost entirely on how well they progress toward learning objectives.
- Standards-based systems measure only a student's most recent level of mastery over the course material.
- In order to avoid distorting students' grades away from their actual level of proficiency, standards-based grading only incorporates summative assessments such as tests or essays, not formative assessments like homework.
- Information from formative assessments can be used to provide valuable feedback to both the student and their parents.
- Students can redo summative assessments until they have demonstrated proficiency.
- Many standards-based systems use rubrics. Rubrics define the specific learning criteria against which teachers will compare a student's proficiency level.
- Standards-based grading systems often use a scale different from A, B, C, D, and F to record students' grades on report cards. One common scale is 4, 3, 2, and 1. The scores provided in a standards-based system correspond to performance standards (p. 5).

Guskey (1994, 2010) established three categories for teachers to provide meaningful, clear, criterion-referenced grading: Product, process, and progress. Guskey (2009b) defined product grading as evaluation of student achievement in relation to an expected outcome through products such as final tests, projects, and culminating assessments; process as grading how students learned through quizzes, homework, participation, and attendance; and progress as grading on how students improved or grew over time (p. 18).

Guskey (2006a) further explained his recommendation that teachers report on each area separately to avoid misinterpretation of the meaning of the grade:

> Interpreting grades thus becomes exceptionally challenging, not only for parents but also for administrators, community members, and even the students themselves. A grade of A, for example, may mean that the students knew what was intended before instruction began (product), did not learn as well as expected but tried very hard (process), or simply made significant improvement (progress). (p. 672)

According to the statement above, separation of product, process, and progress grades allows teachers to provide more meaningful information about students' achievement of academic standards than a single letter grade for the entire class.

Delimitations

The study analyzed data from participating secondary school principals in Minnesota public schools grades 7-12. The study respondents were limited to secondary school principals who were members of the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) and listed in the MASSP listserv. The study was limited to principals serving in Minnesota secondary schools during the time the survey was conducted, October 3-31, 2017. The study did not include Minnesota private or parochial secondary school principals.

Assumptions

It is assumed that secondary school principals included in the study had a basic understanding of the concept and definition of standards-based grading systems. It was also assumed that the study participants openly and honestly and accurately reflected their perceptions of standards-based grading system implementation.

Definition of Terms

ALC: An ALC is an alternative learning center in Minnesota. The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) defined an ALC as a program that provided education to middle school and high school students who met at-risk criteria or were not on track to graduate on time; the ALC could be located in a school or at a different site and must serve students from more than school one district and must include middle school students (Alternative Learning, n.d.).

ALP: An ALP is an alternative learning program in Minnesota. The Minnesota Department of Education defined an ALP as similar to an ALC but may choose to serve students only in their district and choose which grade level students to serve (Alternative Learning, n.d.).

Grading: "The number or letter reported at the end of a period of time as a summary statement of student performance (O'Connor, 2009, p. 2); O'Connor (2009) cites Airasian's (1994) definition: "Making a judgment about the quality of a pupil's performance, whether it is performance on a single assessment or performance across many assessments" (p. 2).

Formative Assessment: As cited in Marzano (2010), Popham (2008), a formative assessment is a process of planned activities used by teachers and students during instruction to provide feedback to teachers and students to improve student learning (p. 22).

Performance levels: Levels at which students' assessment results are based–advanced, proficient, partial, or minimal (Trumbull, 2000b, p. 191). Other performance levels may include "exceed standard; meets standard; approaching standard; below standard" or "extending, acquiring, emerging, pre-emergent" or "distinguished; proficient, apprentice, novice" (Guskey & Bailey, 2010).

Secondary School Principal: For the purposes of the study, lead administrator in a Minnesota public school serving students in grades 7-12.

Secondary School: For the purposes of the study, a public school in Minnesota in which students in any or all of grades 7-12 attend.

Summative Assessment: O'Connor (2009) defined a summative assessment as evaluation and information about a student's achievement of standards at the end of a grading period on items such as tests, projects, and performances (p. 117).

Standards-based Grading: Wiggins (1993, 1996) defined standards-based grading as the teacher providing feedback and appraisal of a student's performance based on a set of standards, and the student may advance to a more challenging standard of learning or, if necessary, relearn the unlearned standard based on the teacher's feedback (as cited in Marzano, 2010, p. 18).

Standards-Referenced Grading: In a standards-referenced grading system (Wiggins 1993, 1996), a teacher provides feedback and appraisal of a student's performance based on a set of standards. The student neither advances to a subsequent standard nor relearns the previous standard based on the evaluation. The student continues to the next level of learning regardless of how the student performed (as cited in Marzano, 2010, p. 18).

Standards-based Report Card: A report to students and parents providing descriptive information to clearly communicate students' performances in relation to standards of learning (Guskey & Bailey, 2010). Students' assessments results are based on district standards and reported in performance levels.

Traditional Grading: Mark Durm (1993) defined traditional grading as grading in which a teacher calculates a grade based on averages of classwork in a percentage system where a teacher ultimately awards students a grade of A, B, C, D, or F (as cited in Marzano & Kendall, 1996a, p. 14).

Proficiency: The determined level at which a student has met the expectations of a standard of learning.

Standards: Synonyms include "objectives," "goals," "outcomes," "competencies" which are specific descriptions of "what students are to know and be able to do as a result of their experiences in school…describe particular elements of content…what specific knowledge students are expected to acquire…and describe levels of performance in relation to that knowledge" (Guskey & Bailey, 2010, pp. 43-44).

Summary

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I includes an introduction to the study, problem statement, purpose statement, research questions, theoretical framework, delimitations, assumptions, definition of terms, and summery. Chapter II, literature review, is organized into three themes including benefits of using a standards-based grading system, the basic considerations for the implementation of a standard-based grading system, and barriers or drawbacks in using or implementing a standards-based grading system. Chapter III consists of the methodology of the study including the research design, description of the participants,

and instruments and procedures used in the study. Chapter IV includes an analysis of the data and discussion of the findings. Chapter V presents a summary, conclusions, limitations, and recommendations for further study of and further practice in standards-based grading.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to examine the reported level of implementation of standards-based grading in select Minnesota secondary schools (grades 7-12) and secondary school principals' perceived benefits and barriers to implementation. The researcher surveyed Minnesota public school principals who served in secondary schools (grades 7-12) during the time of the study October 3 through October 31, 2017. The study examined Minnesota secondary schools' (including grades 7-12) implementation of standards-based grading, those strategies that caused implementation to be successful, and principals' perceptions of the benefits of standards-based grading and barriers to implementation. The study may assist school leaders in their implementation of standards-based grading and, moreover, may assist school administrators, professors of education administration, and researchers create professional development programs or modules to guide school leaders in the design and implementation of successful standards-based grading systems.

In the review of literature, the researcher focused on three main themes: the benefits of reporting student achievement in a standards-based grading system, especially at the secondary level; guidance from standards-based grading educational experts in order for educators to understand the development and implementation of a standards-based grading system; and the barriers and drawbacks of implementing a standards-based grading system in secondary schools.

Theme I–Benefits of Standards-Based Grading

The researcher found four common themes as benefits of standards-based grading: clearer meaning in evaluation of student learning; elimination of grading practices that are not

supported by research to be effective for student academic achievement; fairness and consistency in students' grades, and an increase in student achievement. The first section of the literature review addresses these benefits.

Clearer meaning in evaluation of student learning. McMillan (2009) supported standards-based grading: "The promise of standards-based grading is that both teachers and students will have a clearer conception of what needs to be learned and of what constitutes successful performance" (p. 107). McMillan's basic premise is that evaluation is for the evaluator to provide specific feedback and an evaluative mark to the person he/she is evaluating. The goal of the evaluation is to provide feedback on specific outcomes for improvement and affirmation to the student of acquired learning and skills.

Farr (2000) concurred with McMillan, "Generally speaking, it has been difficult for parents (and students) to 'make meaning' from information provided either on a report card or test report, largely because the information is provided in a kind of code and is not given with reference to standards" (p. 16). As the previous researchers explained, when teachers have a clearer conception of students' learning and skills, then standards-based grading allows a clearer conception of students' learning in a criterion-referenced manner.

Guskey (2001b) explained that standards-based grading systems are criterion-referenced, which, "compare each student's performance to clearly stated performance descriptions that differentiate levels of quality. Teachers judge students' performance by students' actions regardless of how well or poorly their classmates perform" (p. 20). The benefit for students is to see their individual performance based on standards rather than in a norm-referenced system where they are graded based on their peers' performance (p. 20). Munoz and Guskey (2015) indicated,

> Unfortunately, different teachers often use widely varying criteria in determining students' grades, and students often aren't well-informed about those criteria. Recognizing that merging diverse sources of evidence distorts the meaning of any grade, educators around the world assign multiple grades. This idea provides the foundation for standards-based approaches to grading. (p. 65)

The researchers acknowledge here that a benefit of standards-based grading is a clearer meaning of student learning. The evaluative mark or grade is clearly associated with a standard of learning and provides specific feedback to the student as to whether he/she has learned the standard at an acceptable level.

Munoz and Guskey (2015) added,

> Teachers who report multiple grades for these different criteria don't have to worry about how to weight or combine the grading evidence…Reporting multiple grades also increases the validity, the reliability, and the fairness of the grading process. (pp. 65-66)

Ritterband and Heller (2015) reported a clear, more transparent transcript will emerge from the use of standards-based grading in high schools in Maine, "In 2012 passed a law requiring that by 2018 all of its high schools issue proficiency-based diplomas–a 'certification,' as a Maine Department of Education official puts it, that students are proficient in district-defined standards and other skills" (p. 3). They further explained this mandate and its provisions of clarity to student learning will reduce "inexact high school credentials" and create "course credits and diplomas must represent genuine mastery of academic content and skills and not just the accumulation of seat time" (p. 3). Furthermore, they reported that "60 New England colleges and universities have already announced their formal endorsement of

proficiency-based diplomas, indicating that a redesigned transcript without grades will present no barrier to admission" (p. 5).

Jung and Guskey (2007) further explained that clearer, more specific feedback from standards based grading versus a single letter grade is even more important for families of children with special needs. The authors concluded pointed out to this more detailed information as important for placement and intervention decisions (p. 48). This suggests standard-based grades provide specific information to parents, students, and teachers for individual learning plans (IEPs). In addition, with clearer reporting of student progress, special education teachers can report meaningful and clear information for IEP progress monitoring using the standards-based grading model.

Jung (2009) further emphasized the benefit of standards-based grading for students with special needs by stating, "All families deserve an understanding of how their children are doing in school, but for families of children with disabilities, the accuracy and thoroughness of this information is exceedingly necessary" (p. 28). Moreover, Jung continued to explain the value of standards-based grades for students who have special needs as opposed to traditional grading. Letter grades can lead parents to believe either their child is doing well when receiving high grades or not making progress when receiving low grades. Letter grades do not give specific and necessary information for educational teams to make decisions for student services and interventions (pp. 28-29).

In addition to providing meaningful grades specifically to students with special needs in order to make progress on IEP goals, standards-based grading also offers a means for teachers to provide meaningful and accurate grades to English Language Learners. Sampson (2009) contended, "Students who are ELL face many challenges in meeting grade-appropriate

standards, including varying levels of English proficiency and poor academic preparation prior to their enrollment in U.S. schools" (p. 42). If teachers assign a traditional letter grade to an ELL student to show academic progress, that grade does not show clear information to parents and students about how well a student is achieving in school, especially a student who is still learning the English language. Sampson (2009) suggested "…the most important for ensuring fair and meaningful grades for ELL students is separate reporting of the three aspects of product, process, and progress" (p. 48). Sampson emphasized on standards-based grading to bring further clarity and recommended educators to separate student achievement of standards, effort, and progress towards standards (p. 52).

Elimination of grading practices that are not supported by research to be effective for student academic achievement. Research of benefits of standards-based grading indicated that in order to implement standards-based grading, educators will subsequently need to eliminate some educational grading practices deemed by educational grading experts as outdated as well as hindrances to students' academic achievement. These policies include teachers assigning zero points for incomplete or late assignments, using grades as forms of punishment or behavioral control, and using percentages to calculate grades. These policies have no supportive educational research, yet they are still included in traditional, non-standards based grading systems. Therefore, a natural benefit of educators implementing a standards-based grading system is the elimination of these traditional grading practices and policies.

Guskey (2001a) recommended,

> To implement standards-based reforms, educators must take a broader and more systematic view of their efforts. Instead of focusing narrowly on curriculum and

> assessment issues, they must expand their perspective to consider organizational policies that can hinder success, especially grading and reporting student learning. (p. 21)

Teachers assigning zero points in order to calculate a grade does not conform to standards-based grading. Guskey (2001a) stated, "…zeros are typically assigned to punish students for not displaying appropriate effort or demonstrating adequate responsibility. If the grade is to represent how well students have learned or mastered established learning standards, then assigning zeros clearly misses the mark" (p. 20). He recommended instead for teachers to indicate that a student's work is incomplete so the student will do the work and an accurate grade can be entered on a report card reflecting the student's actual achievement (p. 21).

Guskey (2004) indicated that teachers entering a zero for a grade is not accurate in measuring what a student learned and this inaccuracy increases when a teacher includes this zero with other graded work to calculate a student's final grade. Teachers using zeros or low-grade scores as a form of punishment for incomplete work is not supported by research (p. 33). In an earlier publication, Guskey (2001a) warned that zeros and low scores will no encourage more effort but discourage students from or withdrawing from learning. Guskey recommended work marked as incomplete may encourage effort towards work completion (p. 19). McMillan (1999) had emphasized Guskey's recommendations regarding the use of zeros in grading. "If zeros are used for missed assignments, then the teacher is essentially saying the lack of effort is penalized more than expected effort is rewarded" (p. 11).

Wormeli (2006a) had a strong stance against the use of zeros in grading: "Grades must be accurate indicators of students' mastery. Where is the accountability for ethical behavior

when the teacher continues to record zeros which have been proven to be inaccurate portrayals of mastery that are unjustified ethically and mathematically?" (p. 20). Using grades as a means of punishment is not a practice supported with research nor supported in standards-based grading practice.

Wormeli (2011) opined in regard to teachers not accepting late work, "Many teachers reason that they are building moral fiber and preparing students for the working world by denying them the opportunity to redo assignments and assessments–or if they allow retakes, by giving only partial credit…" (p. 22).

However, Wormeli (2011) emphasized the concept of retakes is prolific in the real world:

> LSAT. MCAT. Praxis. SAT. Bar exam. Driver's license. Pilot's license. Auto mechanic certification exam. Every one of these assessments reflects the adult-level, working-world responsibilities our students will one day face. Many of them are high stakes: Peoples' lives depend on these tests' validity as accurate measures of individual competence. All of them can be redone over and over for full credit. (p. 25)

Reeves, Jung, and O'Connor (2017) agreed with Wormeli about grading policies used to punish behavioral issues such as a student submitting work late, tardiness, and conduct. They contend that grades are to "communicate information about student achievement with reference to *learning* goals" (p. 44). Moreover, student behavior has a basis in the academic grade in that the student could behave appropriately but not have mastered the content (p. 44).

Reeves et al. (2017) also commented no meaningful assessment or task in the real world is based on an average score. They provided examples such as licensing to become a driver, pilot, engineer, or hairdresser. "To calculate a grading average across time is to engage

in the fantasy that proficient individuals never make mistakes or, more likely, that their mistakes are counterproductive" (p. 43).

Researchers and practitioners draw attention to the fact of educators implementing a standards-based grading system would naturally remove grading practices that are not supported by research such as teachers using zeros for incomplete or late work, using grades as a punishment, averaging grades, and not allowing retakes.

The researchers supported a teacher marking a student's work incomplete or providing more meaningful, specific feedback based on what a student knows, can do, and can produce based on standards of learning. The opportunity for a student to redo or improve the work becomes a natural option. For example, upon a student's reception of a C on an assignment, the student will not be aware of the weaknesses, strengths and way to improve. When a teacher grades based on specific standards, the student should clearly see the areas completed well and the areas to improve.

Reeves et al. (2017) suggested in order to eliminate these grading practices, there is a need to implement standards-based grading. "...the serious problems with practices we describe [use of average, grading homework, use of zeros, grading behavior] are not controversial among the scholars of classroom assessment. Without question, this is the right work to do" (p. 45).

Fairness and consistency in students' grades. Another benefit of standards-based grading gleaned from literature is fairness and consistency in teachers' use of grades and feedback to students. O'Connor and Wormeli (2011) wrote, "Students in the classroom of teacher *x* who achieve at the same level as students in the classroom of teacher *y* should get

the same grade. Schools should strive for consistency in all their classrooms, and districts should strive for consistency in all their schools" (p. 42).

The researchers outlined the major benefit of standards-based grading as an increased grading fairness and consistency for students. In a traditional grading system, teachers may use grades for a variety of purposes such as communication, motivation, and sorting and selecting. In a standards-based grading system, teachers will have established a purpose for grades, which is to report student achievement. Therefore, teachers reporting grades will have a fair, consistent focus based upon common criteria (p. 42).

Guskey (2006b) conducted a study involving 325 school educators from three U.S. states. The purpose of this study was to investigate the lasting positive and negative effects grading had on educators during their time as students (p. 4).

Guskey (2006b) concluded that 68% of participants in this study reported the most negative grading experiences occurred while attending college while 32% reported the most negative grading experiences while in elementary or high school (p. 7). He also reported, "Other educators described arbitrary standards for grades, harsh criticisms of their work without suggestions for improvement, or high scores receiving low grades because of 'grading on the curve'" (p. 8). Educators must focus "first the importance of clarity and fairness in establishing grading practices…guarantee that their personal opinions and unconscious biases do not influence their grading practices" (p. 13). In addition, according to Guskey, grades which inform and provide suggestions for improvement have a greater value for student achievement. Guskey concluded that participants perceived grading practices that were not intended to improve student achievement as unfair, biased, and embarrassing (p 13). Trumbull (2000b) agreed with Guskey that an end-of-course grade "seems to be more potentially

damaging than a profile or narrative keyed to a set of standards showing how a student 'stacks up' against different sets of expectations" (p. 33).

Trumbull (2000b) also emphasized the importance of clarity and fairness in grading by stating, "…decisions are made on the basis of grades. If a grade is not reliable–that is, if it is not based on clear criteria and justified by adequate evidence regarding performance–then it is not ethical to have that grade influence a student's life outcomes" (p. 33). Trumbull said that traditional grades are not based on clear standards of learning. Trumbull (2000a) suggested that educators having "common standards of performance help to eliminate bias in grading" (p. 123). She further stated, "The more a system can include information about how a student achieved as he or she did and can break down a student's performance into different components the more fair and valid it will be" (p. 119). In conclusion, when teachers grade in a standards-based system, the evaluative mark would have clear, reliable information for one to base a fair judgment and a student would have provided adequate evidence to support that evaluative mark.

As Trumbull suggested, however, in order for one to draw accurate judgments of student learning based on an evaluative mark, curriculum taught must be guaranteed. An area of student achievement addressed by Marzano and ranked as a top priority in student achievement was teachers' providing a guaranteed curriculum for each course. In ensures the content taught for a certain course or grade level is the same no matter who is teaching the course (Marzano, 2003). In terms of standards-based grading, Marzano and Kendall (1996a) stated that in district's implementation of standards-based grading, certain standards or benchmarks would be attached to certain classes thus ensuring courses with the same title will have the same outcomes, regardless of who is teaching the course (p. 19).

Increase in student achievement. Limited empirical studies supporting standards-based grading increases student achievement was found. Hamilton, Stecher, and Yuan (2008) concluded since the implementation of No Child Left Behind in 1990, students on state accountability tests and NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) in reading and mathematics have improved, suggesting a positive connection between standards-based reform and student achievement. However, they noted the true extent of the contribution standards-based reform has had on student achievement directly remains unknown (pp. 45-46). However, some researchers have reported increased student achievement in schools and classrooms that have implemented standards-based grading, as indicated below.

Waters, Burger, and Burger (1995) (as cited in Marzano & Kendall, 1996a) reported student achievement results from Weld County District 6 in Greely, Colorado, which implemented a standards-based system in 1989 focusing on reading, writing, and mathematics. After the district introduced standards-based grading not only did student achievement increase but also there was a decrease in the achievement variance between socioeconomic statuses (p. 197-198). This proved to be true on local assessments (those meeting or exceeding the performance standards locally) as well as on the ACT (American College Test).

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) (as cited in Marzano & Kendall, 1996a) also reported similar positive results in student achievement in two school districts in Colorado. The San Luis Valley school district introduced standards-based grading in 1987. In that district, student achievement on the Adams State College English Proficiency Examination, which measures writing skills for first-year college students, rose from 33% in 1987 to 72% in 1994. The Colorado Springs school district introduced standards-based

grading in 1989. In that district, 11th grade students scoring proficient or advanced on their writing exam increased from 60% in 1989 to over 90% in 1994. For 8th grade students, achievement rose from 30% to 60% proficient or advanced over the same period (p. 199).

Bradbury-Bailey (2011) studied African-American students' achievement in biology and physical science classes to determine whether standards-based grading had an effect on student achievement. According to her, evidence suggested that standards-based grading had a positive impact on African American students' academic performance with a strong correlation between course content averages and the student's actual score on the state-mandated standardized test for physical science and biology (pp. 73-74).

Theme II–Recommendations for Implementing Standards-Based Grading

Guskey and Bailey (2010) recommend six steps for implementing standards-based grading: "1. Defining the purpose, 2. Developing the reporting standards, 3. Addressing essential steps in development, 4. Establishing performance indicators, 5. Developing the reporting form 6. Pilot testing and revision" (pp. 21-22). Each of these steps are described in this section of the review of literature and further supported by other educational practitioners' research.

In addition Carr and Farr (2000) recommend "to map out the development process as a series of steps over several years…start with developing and implementing content standards in all classrooms, the standards-based assessments, and finally a system for public reporting…" (p. 190).

Step one–defining the purpose. Other researchers have supported Guskey and Bailey's (2010) first step of defining the purpose in order to implement standards based grading. Guskey and Jung (2012) further emphasized this as a primary step: "One of the

major reasons that school leaders run into difficulties in their attempts to reform grading and reporting is that they fail to identify the purpose of grading" (p. 23). Reeves (2011) suggested that stakeholders begin with topics in which they can agree about grading and what would be fair grading for students. In addition, if teachers can agree that feedback is a way for students to improve, then principles of grading can be used for students' academic improvement (pp. 77-78).

Heflebower et al. (2014) stated, "In many cases, the transition to standards-based grading requires educators, students, and parents to rethink and reframe beliefs about grading that they have held for many years. The process requires reflection, new learning, and changes in practice" (p. 6).

Marzano and Kendall (1996b) expanded the concept of rethinking grading practices by stating, "First and foremost, the teacher must stop thinking in terms of assignments, tests, and activities to which points are assigned and start thinking in terms of levels of performance in the declarative and procedural knowledge specific to her subject area" (p. 146).

Trumbull (2000b) stated, "Schools need to examine their reasons for grading before choosing a method, if they are going to grade. Such a decision-making process requires identifying beliefs about teaching and learning to ensure that grading practices are aligned with professed philosophies and ultimate educational objectives" (p. 35).

As an example for a rationale for standards-based grading, Townsley (2014) described his school districts' elementary schools had standards-based grading established, but not at the secondary level. To build knowledge, the district created an advisory committee consisting of administrators, teachers, students, and members of the community to discuss the positives, negatives, and research about standards-based grading.

Brookhart (2011) concurred with Trumbull by emphasizing the primary issue is "What meaning do we want our grades to convey? and Who is (are) the primary intended audience(s) for this message" (p. 12). She emphasized this further by posing a series of questions for educators exploring implementation to answer, "…grades are not about what students *earn* but what students *learn*. To what degree do you and your colleagues believe that? If you do agree, what are the advantages to you and your students? If you don't agree, why not? That is the discussion to have" (p. 12).

Moreover, Farr (2000) set forth parameters

to ensure the implementation of grading practices that are valid, reliable, fair, and meaningful:

1. Within a school or district, there must be clear policies, coherent philosophical basis, and consistent criteria for making judgments about student performance.
2. All stakeholder groups must be involved in the development of policies and procedures.
3. Teachers, administrators, students, and parents must share clear understanding about standards and grading methods. (p. 2)

Nagel (2015) gave general guidance about grading policy creation:

Grading policies that are vague in their verbiage or that focus solely on the grading scale and lack specific guidelines often lead to inconsistent grades from classroom to classroom…When schools create policies that have explicit language directing teacher practice, they must ensure this language is not incongruent with effective research to support it. (p. 71)

Marzano and Kendall (1996b) cautioned districts in the development of documents that are unchangeable (p. 246). According to the authors, documents can later be changed by recommending, "One of the healthiest perspectives a district or school can take is to view all plans and documents as drafts that will most likely be altered until the standards-based or standards-referenced system is actually implemented" (p. 246).

Guskey and Bailey (2010) state similar advice on establishing grading purpose:

> The primary reason so many educators fail in their efforts to develop standards-based report cards is that they charge ahead, changing their reporting method without first clarifying the report card's purpose. Before any revision can be planned and any development work begun, the purpose of the report card must be made clear. (p. 21)

Guskey and Bailey (2010) recommend six purposes for grading and report cards:

1. To communicate information about students' achievement to parents
2. To provide information to students for self-evaluation
3. To select, identify, or group students for certain educational paths or programs
4. To provide incentives for students to learn
5. To evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs
6. To provide evidence of students' lack of effort or inappropriate responsibility. (p. 27)

Carr and Farr (2000) indicated,

> School districts must address these three these as they negotiate a path toward a standards-based approach to instructions and assessment for all students:

- Grades should reflect academic achievement of content standards that were taught.

- Quality of instruction and assessment must be fair for all students, especially for subgroups such as English language learners and special education students.
- Reporting to parents must be accurate and informative about what the student has learned over time. (p. 185)

Once a school district establishes a purpose of grading and reporting, Guskey and Bailey (2010) suggested, "To clarify the purpose of a standards-based report card to everyone involved, we recommend that the purpose be printed directly on the report card" (p. 35).

A conclusion one can from the literature suggests the first stage of implementation of standards-based grading begins with establishing stakeholders' philosophy about grading and learning, purpose of grades, and policy.

Step two–**establish standards of learning**. An initial step to creating standards of learning is to understand the definition of standards. Standards of learning have synonyms that include "objectives," "goals," "outcomes," "competencies" which are specific descriptions of "what students are to know and be able to do as a result of their experiences in school…describe particular elements of content…what specific knowledge students are expected to acquire…and describe levels of performance in relation to that knowledge" (Guskey & Bailey, 2010, pp. 43-44).

Heflebower et al. (2014) valued creating standards as a primary step to implementing standards-based grading by stating, "The first step in implementing standards-based grading is to clearly identify and articulate what students need to know and be able to do as a result of schooling…thus it is essential for school leaders…to create teams of teachers to complete this work" (p. 11).

Heflebower et al. indicated that teachers mostly likely will not be able to teach all of the standards in the time available. Instead, they will need to focus on some standards over other standards, which the authors label "prioritized standards…that have been identified as the most essential to a particular grade level, content area, or course" (p. 16). "In addition to prioritizing standards, educators may also need to ensure that that standards are phrased in ways that clearly reflect what students need to know and be able to do" (p. 17). Hefelbower et al (2014) provided criteria in order for educators to determine which standards should be priority:

1. Endurance–Knowledge and skills that will last beyond a class period or course.
2. Leverage–Knowledge and skills that cross over into many domains of learning.
3. Readiness–Knowledge and skills important to subsequent content or courses.
4. Teacher Judgment–Knowledge of content area and ability to identify more- and less-important content.
5. Student opportunity to learn content that will be assessed (p. 18).

Busick (2000) advocated that grades need to be linked to standards: "An ideal standards-based grading system would use information about learning gathered from sound assessments of valued learning targets that are embodied in local, state, or national standards" (p. 19).

When school districts establish standards, Guskey and Bailey (2010) recommend:

> The best reporting standards are precise enough to communicate the knowledge and skills students are expected to acquire but not so detailed that they lose their significance and usefulness when shared with parents and students. Furthermore,

> reporting standards must be expressed in parent-friendly language so that parents and students alike understand exactly what they mean. (p. 42)

Step three–essential steps into practice. McMunn, Scheneck, and McColskey (2003) recognized that in order for teachers to make decisions at the classroom level for reporting student progress on a report card, district leaders must make changes in grade reporting procedures at the district level. The authors recommended an alignment for district procedures to standards so that teachers' grading and assessment practices also align. In addition, for teachers to make classroom grading decisions, they need to have professional development provided to them by district administrators (p. 5).

Proulx, Spencer-May, and Westerberg (2012) reported on the procedures used to implement standards-based grading in the Omaha school district in grades 5-12. Essential steps included implementing teacher training, creating parent support by communicating standards-based grading to parents through district communication and meetings at school, creating proficiency scales, and making curricula decisions about concepts and skills teachers were to teach (pp. 30-32).

O'Connor (2009) established a primary guideline for implementing standards-based grading, "The guideline requires that grading procedures be aligned with stated learning goals. This alignment is direct, and ideally a grade is determined and reported for each learning goal with no overall grade" (p. 46).

Marzano and Heflebower (2011) provided recommendations as essential steps to implementing standards-based grading. They included eliminating the "omnibus grade" and instead develop "measurement topics" that can be specifically graded. Moreover, they suggested having more assessment options available (such as student-generated assessments

where the student determines how he or she can demonstrate a level of performance on standards), and allowing students to retake assessments to improve their assessment scores (pp. 34-36).

Guskey and Bailey (2010) outlined fifteen critical questions for school staff to answer, in order, when developing a standards-based reporting mechanism. They recognized this list is not exhaustive and could include more questions, depending upon a school's particular situation (p. 118).

1. What is the purpose of the report card?
2. How often will report cards be completed and sent home?
3. Will a specific report card be developed for each grade level, or will a more general report card be used across several grade levels?
4. How many reporting standards will be included for each subject area or course?
5. What specific reporting standards will be included at each grade level or in each course?
6. Will standards be set for the grade level or for each marking period?
7. What specific process and progress standards will be reported?
8. How many levels of performance will be reported for each standard?
9. How will the levels be labeled?
10. Will teachers' comments be included and encouraged?
11. How will information be arranged on the report card?
12. What are parents expected to do with this information?
13. What are students expected to do with this information?
14. What policies need to accompany the new reporting procedures?

15. When should input of parents and/or students be sought? (pp. 58, 118)

Step four–**establishing performance indicators**. Creating performance scales or levels of performance is another step in implementation of standards-based grading (Guskey & Bailey, 2010; Heflebower et al., 2014; Marzano, 2010). The authors recommended educators make a decision about use of performance scales to clearly students' ability to perform or learn the material. Researchers used rubrics with a written description of students' tasks and learning outcomes and also provided a performance scale. Researchers referenced and explained the 1, 2, 3, and 4 performance level is used in standards-based grading for the teachers to indicate a student's level of performance (Guskey, 2001b; Guskey & Bailey, 2010; Marzano, 2010; Marzano & Kendall, 1996a). Descriptor words may vary but typically a 4 equates to more advanced performance, a 3 to proficient performance, a 2 to basic performance, and a 1 to partial success or novice performance. Guskey (2001b) also recommended that a legend be placed on the report card for parents to understand the definition of these performance indicators.

Hendry, Armstrong, and Bromberger (2012) conducted a study to determine students' perceptions of the usefulness of viewing exemplars of assignments for better understanding and achievement. This study was conducted at the university level in Australia and the participants were first year students. They are comparable to students in high school for the purposes of standards-based grading. These researchers' findings reflected success for students in classes with exemplars made available by teachers and with provided discussion. Additionally, teachers' explanation of the reasons making the exemplars meet the standards was vital for student understanding (p. 158).

Step five–developing the reporting form. Guskey and Bailey (2010) indicated the decisions in this phase included the indicators of performance to be used, whether progress and achievement will be marked, and what reporting forms will be used (p. 23). According to Heflebower et al. (2014) the report card should have listed the "prioritized standards that are important at each grade level…explain the proficiency-scale-based method used to assign grades…report the prioritized standards and their scores for life skill…separately" (p. 66).

According to Wormeli (2006b), the grade book provide: an accurate statement of what students mastered; should be manageable for the teacher; assure it is easily understood by others without the teacher available to explain it; and provide feedback, document progress, and inform instructional decisions (p. 162).

Researchers also support the separation in reporting of learning with behavioral, non-academic characteristics such as punctuality, participation, classroom behavior, and attendance. (Guskey & Bailey, 2010; Heflebower et al., 2014; O'Connor, 2009; Wormeli, 2006b). If these non-academic items are important for reporting, then they should be reported separately and have their own measure of proficiency or acceptability (Wormeli, 2006b).

Guskey and Bailey (2010) outlined four qualities of effective report cards:

1. Reports on product, process, and progress goals separately
2. Creates an accurate picture of academic strengths and challenges
3. Balances detail with practicality; and
4. Is concise, understandable, and easy to interpret. (p. 173).

Step six–pilot testing and revision. Guskey, Swan, and Jung (2010) reported about the Kentucky initiative to create and implement a common report card for school districts to use in K-12 schools. All schools in Kentucky teach the same standards from the Core Content

Elements and Academic Expectations. However, each of the school's educators is left to the task of developing how to report student learning. Thirty-six educators worked to create a common reporting forms, one for K-6 and another for grades 6-12. Following the creation of these forms, they were piloted in 41 teachers' classrooms.

Parent and teachers in the participating districts completed surveys to compare traditional report cards to the new standards-based report card. At the time of the 2010 report, based on the results, the forms were updated, technical support increased, and implementation extended to more districts were forthcoming in order to have statewide implementation within 3 years. (p. 19).

Reeves (2011) suggested communication with parents regarding the changes in the reporting process. In addition, he specifically suggested educators emphasize the agreed upon principles of grading, purpose of feedback and student improvement based on the feedback, and the notion that the district is open to feedback and suggestions (p. 77).

Theme III–Barriers and Drawbacks to a Standards-Based Grading System

Barriers to implementation. Potentially, with any new initiative or program, benefits and drawbacks exist. Standards-based grading is not immune to this. Numerous educational resources exist to assist district leaders with the implementation of standards-based grading in addition to obstacles they may face in their endeavor. However, limited specific, empirical studies or educational literature addressing obstacles or drawbacks for using a standards-based grading system was found in the literature. This section of the literature review contains information of major barriers and drawbacks to implementation of standards-based grading.

Educational researchers agreed on one major obstacle of implementing standards-based grading: the deep-rooted use of traditional grading, which often undermines those

advocating for a change to a standards-based system and possibly sabotages the change. This is anchored in the lack of clarity provided to stakeholders as to why the change is taking place (Nagel, 2015; Reeves, 2011; Tierney, Simon, & Charland, 2011). In addition to educators' needs to know why the change to standards-based grading is taking place, they also need training. O'Connor (2009) and McMunn et al. (2003) addressed the inaccuracy of standards-based grades if teachers do not receive proper training in determining appropriate achievement levels and reporting procedures.

Even if teachers did receive sufficient training, there is continual change and debate on the standards students should learn and who determines these standards. Lewis (1995) augmented this further stating educators and the public do not fully understand the meaning of standards for student learning. Lewis reported campaigns in communities and states against setting standards because they did not fully understand the meaning of the standards (p. 748).

This debate subverts the standards-based grading philosophy if educators and policy makers do not agree upon what students should learn. For example, Ritterband and Heller (2015) described that 42 states allowed for schools to award a diploma to students who show mastery on concepts and skills versus, under the traditional model, having enough seat time or credit hours. They explained that in 2012, the Maine legislature passed a law requiring by 2018 all high school award proficiency-based diplomas (p. 3). Under this model, teachers would grade on a scale of 1-4 on individual standards and not on a 0-100 percentile in a traditional grading system. However, school leaders applied for an extension to this 2018 deadline. The reasons for the extension was that educators struggled with "defining and assessing proficiency…how proficient is proficient enough? Does everybody have to be

assessed in the same way…does seat time matter at all…and does it still make sense to grade students and rank them?" (p. 4).

As reported in an article by Washuk (2015) in the Lewiston *Sun Times* the Lewiston Superintendent reported his contact with officials at the Maine Department of Education (MDE). The officials reported to him that every high school that implemented the proficiency grading plan had negative pushback from parents. Not surprisingly, the MDE recommended to the Lewiston Superintendent that the district's leaders halt the implementation and continue to train staff on the plan and standard development.

These questions, rooted in traditional grading systems, caused educators in Maine to express philosophical challenges to implementing a standards-based, or as they described, a proficiency based grading system. This tradition is not exclusive to just educators but also includes parents and the community. Guskey and Jung (2006) explained numerous parents' preference to traditional grades due to parents' past experience during their schooling. In addition, since most high school educators still use traditional grades, they want their children to be accustomed to the same system starting in the elementary grades.

The researcher found similar reported situations of parents displaying negative reactions toward the implementation of standards-based grading. Falcon High School in Colorado Springs, Colorado, implemented standards-based grading in 2012-2013 school year. As Kelley (2015) reported, 2 years later parents formed online petitions to revoke the system and voiced opposition at school board meetings and social media (para. 7).

Similarly, as per Downs Grove School District Survey, Rado (2016) reported parents disgust and confusion with standards-based grading implemented for students in grades K-6 and some classes in grade 7 and 8 (paras. 3, pp. 34-37). Moreover, two school districts in

Minnesota--Osseo School District 279 (Engler, 2013) and the Eastern Carver County School District 112 (Dexter, 2015)–had similar reported confusion and angst from parents regarding to a shift from traditional grading of A-F to a standards-based system at their high schools.

The commonality from the schools that attempted to shift from traditional grading on an A-F system to a standards-based grading system was confusion from parents or teachers of the meaning of standards-based grades in terms of student achievement and a preference to reverting to the traditional grading model of teachers assigning grades of A-F.

Consequently, Guskey (2011a) listed five obstacles to grading reform that are all examples of long established, traditional grading philosophies and practices: grades used to differentiate students, the bell curve grade distribution, grades representing students' standing among classmates, poor grades make students try harder, and teachers should give one grade per course. Guskey (2009a) conducted a study involving 556 teachers in a Midwest school district and found, particularly at the secondary level, that teachers grading perspectives valued traditional grading practices such as work habits and behaviors (pp. 11-13). McMillan (2001) drew similar conclusions in a study to describe secondary teachers' grading and assessment practices. He determined "'academic enablers (such as effort, ability, and improvement, and participation)" were important to teachers in assigning a grade to a student (p. 28).

Moreover, Peters and Buckmiller (2015) conducted a study to better understand the barriers to three districts' implementation of standards-based grading according to their leaders. These researchers found three themes in their research as barriers to implementation as reported by the districts' administration: first, student data systems are not configured to accommodate a standards-based grading system; second, parent and community concerns

over GPA, class ranks, college admission status and success, and scholarships. These are all based on traditional grading systems, which lead to the third theme being the fear of the unknown in regard to standards-based grading.

Furthermore, some researchers indicated the lack of major studies published to support standards-based grading improves student achievement (Hamilton et al., 2008; Marzano, 2010; Welsh, D'Agostino, & Kaniskan, 2013). Moreover, Hamilton, Stecher, & Yuan (2008) conclude:

> High quality research on the effects of SBR [standards based reform] is difficult to conduct for a number of reasons, including challenges associated with measuring practices and outcomes, obtaining a representative sample and adequate data, setting up the needed experimental design to study the causal effect of SBR, and addressing the diversity in the assessment programs and accountability policies in different states and districts. (pp. 35-36)

Welsh et al. (2013) conducted a study over 2 years with 125 third and fifth grade classrooms to determine whether standards-based progress reports (SBPR) converged with state test scores. The researchers reported "moderate to weak correspondence between SPPR grades and test scores, depending on the measure used" (p. 32).

Craig (2011) reported, after analyzing 103 elementary report cards from schools that have implemented standards-based grading, a lack of significance on student achievement in the schools in which she researched. Based on her study, Craig recommended "pause" for administrators at the secondary level to implement standards-based grading (pp. 108-109). However, Craig did find for at-risk students that schools removing failing grades and "grading

along a continuum of progress" promotes positive growth, therefore, possibly increasing motivation and self-efficacy (p.109).

Pollio and Hochbein (2015) conducted a study at 11 high schools in Kentucky that implemented project proficiency in order to improve reading and mathematics proficiency. Teachers graded students only on their proficiency level on reading and mathematics standards and implemented interventions based on the results. Pollio and Hochbein reported a strong association between course grades and standardized test scores in students who experienced standards-based grading over those who experienced traditional grading. This was true for the subgroups of minority students and disadvantaged students as well. However, the researchers reported they could not conclusively determine that the implementation of standards-based grading practices lead to increased achievement. They did report that the implementation of project proficiency, which included curricular, instructional, and standards-based grading did increase student achievement, but could not solely attributed the achievement to standards-based grading (pp. 15-21).

In her study of Algebra II students, Rosales (2013) concluded standards-based grading did not impact the results of the end of course assessment neither traditional nor standards-based grading was more beneficial than the other on the end of course assessment (pp. 55-59).

Hamilton et al. (2008) noted a collective of challenges standards-based grading developers face when implement the system. First, they report that high-stakes tests, rather than standards tend to drive practice rather than curriculum, instruction, and standards. Second, many current state tests do not adequately assess all of the standards, knowledge, and higher-order skills but rather tend to assess lower-level skills, since multiple-choice tests are much easier to create (p. 4).

These researchers found another challenge if strong sanctions are attached to student tested outcomes. “Because the tests drive responses, the kinds of practices that teachers and administrators adopt in response to SBR [standards-based reporting] tend to focus more on tested material and less on the untested content of the standards than would generally be desired” (p. 5). They summarized this point by concluding educators may focus on test preparation more than the content because of the pressure of achieving high test scores.

According to Hamilton et al. (2008), another challenge is the lack of specificity about who is creating and choosing the curriculum and instruction method. State policymakers create standards and localities create the curriculum and instruction. However, as the authors suggested, when scores are low, teachers at the local level may lose that control and other entities such as state organizations, administrators, and school boards may want to control these decisions (p 5).

Finally, Hamilton et al. (2008) determined, “One of the most frequently heard criticisms of today’s SBR systems is the wide variation in feathers of state accountability systems, particularly the varying meanings of ‘proficient’” (p. 6). Further implications are compounded for students with disabilities to determine if their learning is proficient based on standards. Guskey and Jung (2009) rhetorically asked if grades for these students should be based on the grade level standard or be adapted, be based on achievement, or be based on progress (p. 54). “This shift in focus to assigning grades based on precise levels of performance with regard to articulated learning standards makes the task of grading students with disabilities much more challenging (p. 55).

Summary

The Chapter II literature review provided background information including the benefits, implementation process recommendations, and barriers and drawbacks associated with implementation of standards-based grading. Several researchers revealed the benefits and recommended implementation process for standards-based grading. Yet others indicated the barriers to implementation and drawbacks of standards-based grading. Chapter III addresses the research methodology used for the study.

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

The review of literature provided educational researchers' professional advice and expertise on the benefits, implementation, and barriers and drawbacks of standards-based grading. Although numerous resources exist on these topics, little research was found on the reason for Minnesota secondary school's lack of implementation or documentation of implementation of standards-based grading.

Chapter III provides the research methodology employed to identify Minnesota secondary school principals' perception of barriers to implementing standards-based grading exist in secondary school in Minnesota. The study examined Minnesota secondary schools' (including grades 7-12) implementation of standards-based grading, principals' perceptions of those strategies that caused implementation to be successful, and principals' perceptions of the benefits of standards-based grading implementation. In addition, the study examined the perceptions of select secondary school principals as to the barriers to standards-based grading implementation plans.

Statement of the Problem

Educational researchers have published foundational recommendations and guidelines to support the implementation and use of standards-based grading (Guskey, 2009a; Guskey & Bailey, 2010; Heflebower et al., 2014; Marzano, 2010; Marzano & Kendall, 1996a; Nagel, 2015; O'Connor, 2009). However, limited research was found indicating barriers to the implementation or successful use of standards-based grading in Minnesota secondary schools (grades 7-12).

This mixed-methods study examined select Minnesota secondary schools' (grades 7-12) implementation of standards-based grading, principals' perceptions of those strategies that caused implementation to be successful, and principals' perceptions of the benefits of standards-based grading and barriers to implementation. In addition, the study examined the perceptions of select Minnesota secondary school principals as to the barriers to standards-based grading implementation plans.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the reported level of implementation of standards-based grading in select Minnesota secondary schools (grades 7-12) and perceived benefits and barriers to implementation. A paradox exists in that every state has adopted educational standards as benchmarks that students should achieve and be able to demonstrate, yet limited research has been found that states, Minnesota in particular, have adopted reporting schematics that detail students' achievement on these standards (Guskey & Bailey, 2010; O'Connor, 2009). Kentucky was one of the first states to develop and pilot a statewide, standards-based grading system at the secondary level (Guskey, 2011b, p. 53).

Even with teachers focusing on established standards, education researchers have stated that grades were not primarily reported to acknowledge that students had achieved an acceptable level of proficiency specifically and clearly aligned to the standards. Rather, grades were reported predominantly at the secondary school level on the basis of an amalgamation of factors such as tests, quizzes, daily work, attendance, and behavior with no clear indication to students, parents, teachers, or school systems on how well students had learned or performed on the standards (Nagel, 2015, p. 7; O'Connor, 2009, p. 21; Wiggins, 1994, p. 28). Thus, after teachers reported final grades, for example A's, B's, or C's, the

grading reports may have continued to fail to reflect accurately to the students or the students' parents the students' knowledge or performance levels and hence, were of limited use (Trumbull, 2000b, p. 29; Wiggins, 2006, p. 90).

This inconsistency in educators' use of standards for student learning and the lack of research indicating grading on those standards to report students' performance support the need for further study of standards-based grading. The study may assist school leaders in their implementation of standards-based grading and, moreover, assist school administrators, professors of education administration, and researchers create professional development programs or modules to guide school leaders in the design and implementation of successful standards-based grading systems.

Research Design–Mixed Methods Approach

The researcher employed a mixed methods research design in the study. Creswell (2009) explained the mixed methods research approach as originating in the late 1950s by Campbell and Fisk as a methodology for collecting data using both qualitative and quantitative means to study validity in psychological traits. Researchers soon determined biases in one method could possibly cancel biases in another method, and triangulating the data would seek the convergence of the data. By the 1990s, the mixed methods design evolved beyond just seeking convergence to combining qualitative and quantitative data (p. 14).

The mixed methods approach employs a strategy of inquiry in a pragmatic, worldview approach where the researcher collecting both qualitative and quantitative data will garner more data and a better understanding of the problem (Creswell, 2009, p. 18).

The study employed a concurrent mixed methods strategy defined by Creswell (2009) as when "…the researcher converges or merges quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem…collects data at the same time and then integrates the information in the interpretation of the overall results" (pp. 14-15).

Study Participants

The researcher presented the research questions to participating secondary school principals (grades 7-12) of Minnesota public schools through SurveyMonkey (Appendix A). Distribution of the study's survey was limited to those secondary school principals who were members of the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP). MASSP has a population of secondary administrators of more than 1300 active and retired high school and middle school administrators. The study focused only on those secondary school principals who were currently serving in schools with a population of students in grades 7-12.

The characteristics of the respondents varied by the grade-levels served in their schools and the respondents' level of understanding of standards-based grading: knowing nothing; novice; beginner; proficient; and expert.

Human Subject Approval–
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

The researcher ensured that ethical considerations had been taken into account in developing and implementing the study survey. The researcher submitted to the St. Cloud State University's Institutional Review Board the study and survey instrument for approval (Appendix B). Those participants who agreed to participate in the study were informed that they had the option to decline or withdraw from the survey at any time, as well as the assurance their identity was protected and their responses were anonymous. The risk of

participating in the study was minimal, and the researcher maintained the security of the survey responses until completion of the study and, then, the data was destroyed.

Data Collection Procedures and Timeline

The researcher contacted the MASSP executive director through e-mail on July 31, 2017, to seek permission to solicit MASSP secondary school principals' participation in the study through the distribution of the study survey through SurveyMonkey. The researcher explained the topic of the dissertation, the purpose of the survey, and potential timeline of completion of the survey by participants. A letter of support, signed by the Executive Director, was e-mailed to the researcher on August 1, 2017 (Appendix C).

The survey was distributed to respondents on October 3, 2017, and concluded on October 31, 2017. The researcher collaborated with the MASSP executive director and his office staff to dispatch the survey on behalf of the researcher to participants on October 3, 2017. On October 10, 2017, and October 20, 2017, the researcher, in coordination with MASSP office staff, sent reminder e-mails to participants to urge them to complete the survey if they had not already done so (Appendix D).

The SurveyMonkey survey was distributed through e-mail to 603 active principals of Minnesota secondary schools, grades 7-12 or 9-12, who were members MASSP. The researcher included an explanation of the purpose of the study, indicated MASSP's support of the research, and assured participants their responses would remain anonymous.

The researcher used the St. Cloud State University's Statistical Center (http://www.stcloudstate.edu/graduatestudies/statconsulting/default.asp) to assist in the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data in the mixed methods research design.

Research Questions

1. What were the perceived barriers reported by select Minnesota secondary school principals in the implementation of a standards-based grading system in secondary schools?
2. What were the perceived benefits reported by select Minnesota secondary school principals in the implementation of a standards-based grading system in secondary schools?
3. What methods did select Minnesota secondary school principals perceive resulted in the successful implementation of a standards-based grading system in their secondary schools?
4. What recommendations did select Minnesota secondary school principals offer as strategies for the successful implementation of standards-based grading in their secondary schools?

Hypothesis

Creswell (2009) explained there are two types of hypothesis used in research: null hypothesis or alternative (directional or nondirectional) hypothesis (pp. 134-135). The researcher used an alternative directional hypothesis, which Creswell defined as "the investigator makes a prediction about the expected outcome, basing this prediction on prior literature and studies on the topic that suggest a potential outcome" (p. 134).

Research question one elicited participants' responses to what they perceive as barriers to the implementation of standards-based grading in their secondary schools. The researcher hypothesized that most participants would rate parent and community resistance to implementation and a lack of empirical evidence that standards-based grading would improve

student achievement as the prominent barriers of implementation based on research outlined in Chapter II of the study.

Research question two asked participants what their perceived benefits of standards-based grading. The researcher hypothesized that most participants would provide feedback that there are benefits to utilizing a standards-based grading system in their schools. The researcher believed most respondents would not be able to provide specific benefits as referenced in Chapter II of the study.

Research question three asked participants to indicate those methods of implementation they believe made the transition to standards-based grading successful in their schools. The question's purpose was to determine if the participants' schools had implemented a standards-based grading system and whether or not they could identify methods that made the implementation successful. Since the researcher had not found evidence of successful implementation in a Minnesota school, the researcher hypothesized receiving minimal feedback to this questions.

Research question four asked participants for recommendations secondary school principals should consider as part of standards-based grading implementation. The purpose of the question was to gather the principals' responses that were not cited in the study's literature review as guidelines for implementation and, therefore, be of assistance in the conduct of future studies. The researcher hypothesized not to receive a large number of new considerations for implementation that were not referenced in Chapter II of the study.

Instrumentation

A survey was conducted using SurveyMonkey with questions designed to gather information from select Minnesota secondary school principals on the guiding research

questions. The purpose of the instrument was to gather perceptions of Minnesota secondary school principals currently serving grades 7-12 or 9-12 on the implementation of standards-based grading. The survey was based on research on the benefits and barriers of implementation of standards-based grading. Questions were generated using a Likert scale with the following possible responses: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Participants were provided the opportunity to provide written responses to each question as additional information.

The survey included two demographic questions: the grade levels principals served at their schools and the level to which they understood standards-based grading. Responses to the demographic question pertaining to the grade levels served were as follows: high school; middle school; ALC/ALP; Other (please specify). Responses to the demographic question pertaining to the level to which the respondents understood standards-based grading were as follows: knowing nothing–I have limited experience with or knowledge of the topic;

Novice–I have limited experience with or knowledge of the topic;

Beginner–I understand the concept/have general knowledge of the topic;

Proficient–I had some training and understand the components of implementation; and

Expert–I had extensive training and could provide implementation training to other schools.

The survey was piloted with members of St. Cloud State University's Educational Administration and Leadership Cohort 7 and Cohort 8 doctoral students in addition to the researcher's academic advisor. The researcher reviewed the feedback with the dissertation committee chair and the dissertation committee members before submission to the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Data Analysis

Creswell (2009) wrote that data analysis for mixed methods research pertains to the type of research strategy used (p. 218).

The researcher used the St. Cloud State University Statistical Research and Consulting Center to assist with data analysis employing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. The researcher also incorporated the analysis capabilities provided in Survey Monkey to analyze the data. Tables provided in Chapter IV display the results of the survey responses.

Quantitative questions were posed using a Likert scale offering the following four response choices: Strongly agree (4); Agree (3); Disagree (2); Strongly Disagree (1). Data tables were created to indicate the frequency and mean values of each response. The researcher determined that a mean value above 2.50 revealed an agreement among the respondents to each statement.

The St. Cloud State University Statistical Research and Consulting Center staff generated internal reliability data using Chronbach's Alpha, and the results are provided in the discussion of the research questions.

Respondents were provided statements to which they could respond qualitatively: "Please provide any other perceived benefits to implementation of standards-based grading" and "Please include recommendations for the successful implementation of standards-based grading at secondary schools." Respondents who identified themselves as not serving in schools that had implemented standards-based grading or in formal processes to implement standards-based grading were provided the following statement to which they could respond: "Please provide any other perceived barriers to implementation of standards-based grading."

For these qualitative responses, the researcher created a coding worksheet (Appendices A, B, and C) in order to determine common themes in the responses.

Creswell (2009) explained that in a mixed-methods study utilizing concurrent strategies, qualitative data may be converted to quantitative data "by creating codes and themes...the counting the number of times they occur in the text data…" (p. 218). Creswell further explained that this conversion qualitative data to quantitative data allows a researcher to compare qualitative results with other quantitative results (p. 218).

Summary

Chapter III provided the study's statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research design, information on participants, data collection procedures and timeline, research questions, instrumentation, and data analysis. Chapter IV presents the results of this study. Chapter V includes a discussion of the conclusions, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further study and research.

Chapter IV: Results

Introduction

For over 25 years, educational standards for learning have been at the forefront of education reform (Guskey & Bailey, 2010; U.S Department of Education, 2008). According to Guskey and Bailey (2010), standards answer questions about what students should learn, be able to do, and be able to create (pp. 13-14). Reporting grades in a standards-based format, particularly at the secondary school level, has not maintained pace with standards-based educational reform in the development of standards-based grading systems (Guskey, 2009; Heflebower et al., 2014).

Limited research was found indicating barriers to the implementation or successful use of standards-based grading in Minnesota secondary schools (grades 7-12).

This inconsistency in educators' use of standards for student learning and the lack of research indicating grading on those standards in reporting students' performance support the need for further study of standards-based grading. The study was intended to assist school leaders in their implementation of standards-based grading. Moreover, the study may assist school administrators, professors of education administration, and researchers develop professional development to guide school leaders in the design and implementation of successful standards-based grading systems.

This chapter is organized in the following sections: Research Questions; Response Rate; Demographic Characteristics of the Sample; Research Findings for each Research Question; and summary of the chapter.

Research Questions

1. What were the perceived barriers reported by select Minnesota secondary school principals in the implementation of a standards-based grading system in secondary schools?
2. What were the perceived benefits reported by select Minnesota secondary school principals in the implementation of a standards-based grading system in secondary schools?
3. What methods did select Minnesota secondary principals perceive resulted in the successful implementation of a standards-based grading system in their secondary schools?
4. What recommendations did select Minnesota secondary school principals offer as strategies for the successful implementation of standards-based grading in their secondary schools?

Response Rate

From the 603 Minnesota secondary school principals who were recipients of the survey, the researcher received 93 completed surveys with a response rate of 15.5%. A total of 105 secondary school principals agreed to participate in the survey. A total of three recipients failed to complete the survey after their initial agreement. Those three respondents were removed from the data analysis. Another nine recipients agreed to participate in survey, answered the first question on the level of their knowledge of standards-based grading, and the second question on the grade levels of the schools in which they were principals and, then, subsequently discontinued completion of the survey. Because these nine respondents did not complete the survey in its entirety, they were removed from the data analysis.

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

The survey included two demographic questions: the grade levels principals served at their schools and the level to which they understood standards-based grading. Responses to the demographic question pertaining to the grade levels served were as follows: high school; middle school; ALC/ALP; Other (please specify). Responses to the demographic question pertaining to the level to which the respondents understood standards-based grading were as follows: knowing nothing–I have limited experience with or knowledge of the topic;

Novice–I have limited experience with or knowledge of the topic;

Beginner–I understand the concept/have general knowledge of the topic;

Proficient–I had some training and understand the components of implementation; and

Expert–I had extensive training and could provide implementation training to other schools.

Table 4.1 presents the participants responses to the question "What is the grade level of your school?" The survey indicated that 46 respondents or 49.4% identified their schools as high schools, while 27 respondents or 29.0% identified their schools as middle schools. Only three respondents or 3.2% identified their schools as an ALC/ALP (Alternative Learning Center/Alternative Learning Program). Respondents who identified their schools as "other" totaled 17 responses or 18.2%.

Table 4.1

The School Types Served by Principal Respondents

	Frequencies				
Grade level of school	HS	MS	ALC/ ALP	Other	Total
Total	46	27	3	17	93

Table 4.1.1 indicates more specifically the principals' "other "responses on the grade levels of their schools as reported in Table 4.1. Of the 17 respondents, nine respondents identified their schools as serving grades 9-12; four respondents identified their schools as serving grades 5-8; three identified their schools as a K-12 building; three respondents identified their schools as serving grades 6-12; and one respondent identified selected middle school and high school as a response.

Table 4.1.1

The Grade Levels of Schools Served by Principal Respondents

	Frequencies					
Grade level of school	K-12	5-8	6-12	7-12	MS and HS	Total
Total	3	1	3	9	1	17

Table 4.2 presents the participants' responses on their levels of understanding of standards-based grading. Response choices included the following: I know nothing of the

topic; Novice–I have limited experience with or knowledge of the topic; Beginner–I understand the concept/have general knowledge of the topic; Proficient–I had some training and understand the components of implementation; Expert–I had extensive training and could provide implementation training to other schools.

Of the 93 responses included in the survey analysis, no respondents indicated that they knew nothing about standards-based grading. Forty-one respondents or 44% identified themselves as proficient; 38 respondents or 40.8% identified themselves as a beginner; 11 respondents or 11.8% identified themselves as novice; and three or 3.2% identified themselves as expert.

Table 4.2

Reported Levels of Understanding of Standards-Based Grading by Principal Respondents

	Frequencies					
Level of understanding	Know Nothing	Novice	Beginner	Proficient	Expert	Total
Total	0	11	38	41	3	93

Data Analysis

The researcher used the St. Cloud State University Statistical Research and Consulting Center to assist in data analysis employing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. The researcher also used the analysis capabilities provided in Survey Monkey to analyze the data.

Quantitative questions were posed using a Likert scale offering the following four choices: Strongly Agree (SA = 4); Agree (A = 3); Disagree (D = 2); Strongly Disagree (SD =

1). Data tables were created to indicate the number and mean to each response. The researcher determined that a mean above 2.50 showed a strong agreement with the statement provided.

The St. Cloud State University Statistical Research and Consulting Center staff generated internal reliability data using Chronbach's Alpha and the results are provided in the discussion of the research questions.

All respondents were provided statements in which to respond qualitatively: "Please provide any other perceived benefits to implementation of standards-based grading" and "Please include recommendations for the successful implementation of standards-based grading at secondary schools." Respondents who identified as not serving in a school that has implemented standards-based grading or in a formal implementation process were provided a statement in which to respond: "Please provide any other perceived barriers to implementation of standards-based grading." For these qualitative responses, the researcher created a coding worksheet (Appendices E, F, and G) in order to determine common themes in the responses.

Creswell (2009) explained in a mixed-methods study utilizing concurrent strategies, that qualitative data may be converted to quantitative data "by creating codes and themes...the counting the number of times they occur in the text data…" (p. 218). Creswell further explains that this allows a researcher to compare qualitative results with the quantitative results (p. 218).

Research Findings

Research Question 1. *What were the perceived barriers reported by select Minnesota secondary school principals in the implementation of a standards-based grading system in secondary schools?*

Respondents were asked to indicate their levels of agreement or disagreement to 10 commonly reported barriers to implementation of standards-based grading that the researcher included in the study's literature review. The purpose of posing the question was to determine agreement or disagreement with the existence of barriers that caused those participants not to have implemented standards-based grading in their schools. The question was posed in the study's survey to those principals who identified their schools as having not fully implemented standards-based grading (to the stage of reporting grades using a standards-based report card) or were not involved in a formal process of implementation. A total of 84 valid responses were received to the question.

A Likert scale was used for each of the 10 barriers, and respondents were provided four choices from which to choose their levels of agreement: Strongly Agree (SA = 4); Agree (A = 3); Disagree (D = 2); Strongly Disagree (SD = 1). A mean score above 2.50 signifies the respondents have above-average level of agreement and a mean below 2.50 signifies respondents have a below-average level of agreement.

The St. Cloud State University Statistical Research and Consulting Center staff generated internal reliability data of .690 using Chronbach's Alpha for the questions reported in Table 4.3 using the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS). The results of the research question are found in Table 4.3.

From the 10 provided possible barriers to implementation of standards-based grading, eight (barriers 2, 3, and 5-10 in Table 4.3) had mean scores above 2.50, exhibiting respondents' agreement with these barriers. The data provided confirmation of perceived barriers that exist in the implementation of standards-based grading. Based on the mean scores, the most predominant barriers identified in implementing standards-based grading

included the following: “Post-secondary institutions require high school transcripts that report traditional (grades A-F) grades and a GPA (grade point average)” (mean = 2.99); “Limited professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators to learn how to implement standards-based grading” (mean = 2.95); “Agreement on what standards-based report cards should contain” (mean = 2.89); “Agreement on how report cards should be constructed” (mean = 2.89); and “Possible reprisal from parents or the community (mean = 2.83).

Based upon the mean scores that were numerically below 2.50, the barriers to implementation of standards-based grading with which respondents indicated disagreement or strong disagreement as barriers included the following: “There is limited evidence that standards-based grading improves student achievement” (mean = 2.26); “In standards-based grading, it is difficult to determine what proficiency actually means in order to post a grade of proficiency” (mean = 2.38).

Table 4.3

Barriers: Secondary School Principals' Possible Reasons Why Standards-Based Grading Has Not Been Implemented in Their Schools

	Frequencies					
Statements	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean
1. There is limited evidence that standards-based grading improves student achievement.	2	28	44	10	84	2.26
2. Traditional grading (grading using A-F) has a strong foundation in education to support a change to standards-based grading.	6	46	29	3	84	2.65
3. Limited professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators to learn how to implement standards-based grading.	17	48	17	2	84	2.95
4. In standards-based grading, it is difficult to determine what proficiency actually means in order to post a grade of proficiency.	3	32	43	6	84	2.38
5. Possible reprisal from parents or the community.	14	45	22	3	84	2.83
6. Post-secondary institutions require high school transcripts that report traditional (grades A-F) grades and a GPA (grade point average).	18	51	11	4	84	2.99
7. Student data systems are not configured appropriately to allow teachers to report grades in a standards-based manner.	14	40	29	1	84	2.79
8. Unknown consequences of changing to standards-based grading.	8	51	24	1	84	2.78
9. Agreement on what standards-based report cards should contain.	12	51	21	0	84	2.89
10. Agreement on how report cards should be constructed.	9	58	16	1	84	2.89

Likert-scaled responses in questions 1-10 in Table 4.3: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4; Agree (A) = 3; Disagree (D) = 2; Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1

As reported in Chapter III of the study, the researcher hypothesized that respondents would rate parent and community resistance to the implementation of standards-based based grading and a lack of empirical evidence that standards-based grading improved student

achievement as the prominent barriers to implementation based on research reported in Chapter II of the study. Respondents expressed agreement that parent and community resistance was a barrier to implementation of standards-based grading (mean = 2.83). However, respondents disagreed that a lack of empirical evidence existed to support the use of standards-based grading in secondary schools (mean = 2.26). The respondents also reported disagreement that determining the meaning of proficiency to post a grade was not a strong barrier to implementation of standards-based grading (mean = 2.38).

Respondents to the question were also asked to provide a written statement of other perceived barriers to implementation of standards-based grading in secondary schools in order for the researcher to determine if there were other perceived barriers to implementation of standards-based grading that the researcher had not identified. The researcher created a coding worksheet (Appendix E) in order to determine common themes in the responses.

The predominant barrier themes the researcher obtained from coding participants' written responses were staff "buy-in" or support for standards-based grading and the time needed for support. The third most predominant barrier response was the need for staff development on standards-based grading, while the fourth most frequent cited barrier was parent and community support. Other perceived barriers that emerged as themes included the strong tradition in grading; post-secondary institutions need of grades; the grading system changing; not knowing what to do with a student who accelerates in learning; and the fear of change.

Research Question 2. *What were the perceived benefits reported by select Minnesota secondary school principals in the implementation of a standards-based grading system in secondary schools?*

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with four commonly reported benefits of implementing standards-based grading that the researcher reported in the study's literature review. The purpose of the question was to determine the participants' agreement or disagreement with the benefits of standard-based grading as referenced in research from Chapter II of the study. The question was posed in the study's survey to all respondents. A total of 93 valid responses were received.

A Likert scale was used for each of the four offered benefits, and respondents were provided four choices from which to choose their levels of agreement: Strongly Agree (SA = 4); Agree (A = 3); Disagree (D = 2); Strongly Disagree (SD = 1). A mean score above 2.50 signified the respondents had above-average level of agreement with a benefit, and a mean below 2.50 signified respondents had a below-average level of agreement with the benefit.

The St. Cloud State University Statistical Research and Consulting Center staff generated internal reliability data of .758 using Chronbach's Alpha for the questions reported in Table 4.4 using the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS).

As illustrated in Table 4.4, from the four possible benefits of implementing standards-based grading, all of them had mean scores above 3.00, exhibiting respondents' agreement with these benefits. The predominant benefit of standards-based grading was "Reduction or elimination of grading practices such as assigning zero points for a grade for missing work, averaging grades, using a bell curve, or grading based on student behavioral characteristics (late work, missing work) (mean = 3.48). The benefit which received the lowest mean was

"Increase in student achievement" (mean = 3.01). No respondents strongly disagreed with any of the benefits provided by the researcher.

Table 4.4

Secondary School Principals' Perceptions of Benefits to Standards-Based Grading

	Frequencies					
Statements	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean
1. Clear meaning of grades for students and parents.	41	41	11	0	93	3.32
2. Provides beneficial information for formulating goals and plans for students with an IEP, 504 plan, or for EL students' progress goals.	29	56	8	0	93	3.22
3. Reduction or elimination of grading practices such as assigning zero points for a grade for missing work, averaging grades, using a bell curve, or grading based on student behavioral characteristics (late work, missing work, etc.).	57	24	12	0	93	3.48
4. Increase in student achievement.	16	62	15	0	93	3.01

Likert-scaled responses in questions 1-4 in Table 4.4: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4; Agree (A) = 3; Disagree (D) = 2; Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1

Respondents were asked to provide a written statement of other perceived benefits of the implementation of standards-based grading to determine if they perceived other benefits that were not identified by the researcher. The researcher created a coding worksheet (Appendix F) to determine common themes in the responses.

The predominant benefit themes the researcher identified of the implementation of standards-based grading were the following: clarity of what students are to learn; clarity of what students did learn; and students can learn at their own pace. Other benefit themes included clarity of grades; grades and content align; increase in student achievement, teacher accountability; and students not penalized by grades.

As reported in Chapter III of the study, the researcher hypothesized that respondents would provide a high rate of agreement that standards-based grading would be beneficial to implement in their schools, but they were not able to provide a high rating for any other specific benefits that had not been identified by the researcher. Based upon the study's findings, respondents did provide agreement on all benefits outlined in Table 4.4 with an average mean rating of 3.26 for the four benefits cited. In addition, respondents did cite benefits not provided in Chapter II of the study's literature review as cited in Appendix F. The predominant themes included clarity of what student did learn, students able to learn at their own pace, grades and content aligning, teacher accountability, and students not penalized by grades using the learning process.

Research Question 3. *What methods did select Minnesota secondary school principals perceive resulted in the successful implementation of a standards-based grading system in their secondary schools?*

The question was posed to those respondents who identified themselves as serving as principals in a schools in which standards-based grading had been fully implemented (to the stage of reporting grades using a standards-based report card) or were involved in a formal process of implementation. The purpose of the question was to determine if the study's participants had implemented standards-based grading in their schools and identify the perceived methods that made the implementation successful.

Of the 93 principals who completed the study's survey, nine or 9.7% indicated they had either fully implemented or were in the process of implementing standards-based grading in their schools. The researcher determined that a mean score above 2.50 signified

respondents had agreed the stated method was beneficial in their implementation of standards-based grading.

A Likert scale was used to access each of the four methods the researcher provided to aid in making the transition to fully implement or begin to implement standards-based grading in their schools. Respondents were provided four choices to report their levels of agreement: Strongly Agree (SA = 4); Agree (A = 3); Disagree (D = 2); Strongly Disagree (SD = 1). A mean score above 2.50 signified the respondents had an above-average level of agreement with the statements, while a mean score below 2.50 signified respondents had a below-average level of agreement.

The St. Cloud State University Statistical Research and Consulting Center staff generated internal reliability data of .667 using Chronbach's Alpha for the questions reported in Table 4.5 using the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Table 4.5 indicates that respondents affirmed the main perceived method that assisted their schools in transitioning to standards-based grading systems was the creation of a clear reporting schematic or report card that was user friendly for teachers and parents (mean = 3.75). The three methods that were rated highest in assisting a school in implementing a standards-based grading system were as follows: establishing clear standards of learning to base grades (mean = 3.50); communicating a clear purpose for grading to staff and community (mean = 3.44); and creating clear performance indicators for student learning (mean = 3.25). Only one respondent cited disagreement with the methods provided by the researcher that were viewed as helpful in transitioning to the implementation of standards-based grading.

Table 4.5

Methods of Implementation Perceived Helped to Make the Transition to Fully Implement or Begin to Implement Standards-Based Grading Successful

	Frequencies						
Statements	SA	A	D	SD	OB	Total	Mean
1. Communicating a clear purpose for grading to our staff and community/parents.	4	5	0	0	0	9	3.44
2. Establishing clear standards of learning in which to base our grades.	5	2	1	0	1	8	3.50
3. Creating a clear reporting schematic/report card that was user friendly for teachers and parents.	6	2	0	0	1	8	3.75
4. Establishing clear performance indicators (e.g. does not meet; partially meets; meets; exceeds)	2	6	0	0	1	8	3.25

Likert-scaled responses in questions 1-4 in table 4.5: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4; Agree (A) = 3; Disagree (D) = 2; Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1; we have only begun the process, so I can't answer this yet (OB) = 0

As reported in Chapter III of the study, the researcher hypothesized respondents would not provide a high rate of response indicating those methods of implementation that made the transition to standards-based grading successful in their schools. This was hypothesized because the researcher did not find evidence of successful implementation of standards-based grading in Minnesota secondary schools. Table 4.5 confirmed the researcher's hypothesis that there was a low rate of response from respondents who indicated their schools had implemented or had begun a formal process to implement standards-based grading.

Table 4.6 reports respondents' assessment of the levels their schools had implemented standards-based grading or initiated formal processes for implementation. Of the nine responses, eight respondents served in schools with grade levels regarded as middle schools (grades 5-8) and one in a school regarded as a high school (grades 9-12).

Table 4.6

Grade Levels that Have Fully Implemented or Have a Formal Process for Implementation of Standards-Based Grading

	Frequencies					
Grade levels	5-8	6-8	6-8 Math and Science Classes	7-8	9-12	Total
Total	1	5	1	1	1	9

Research Question 4. *What recommendations did select Minnesota secondary school principals offer as strategies for the successful implementation of standards-based grading in secondary schools?*

Respondents were provided an open-ended statement in which they were offered the opportunity to provide recommendations for the successful implementation of standards-based grading in secondary schools. The researcher created a coding worksheet to record common themes of recommendations from the responses (Appendix G).

The most common theme that emerged as a recommendation was having adequate staff training and planning on standards-based grading. The researcher determined 36 recommendations were related to this theme. The recommendation is consistent with a predominant barrier to implementation as reported in Table 4.3 of the study–the need for staff development and training in order to implement standards-based grading.

The second most common theme reported by respondents was proper communication of standards-based grading to the community, particularly parents of students within the school.

As reported in Table 4.3, proper communication to parents received a mean score of 2.83 by respondents as a barrier to implementation of standards-based grading. The researched noted that 14 responses pertained to the theme of proper communication with parents of students in the school and the community

Other thematic recommendations which emerged included the following: school district staff to model implementation after other school districts who have implemented standards-based grading; school leaders should first establish what students are to learn before implementing standards-based grading; school leaders should determine and provide a clear meaning of grades that teachers provide to students; and school leaders should find research supporting standards-based grading and provide that to teachers through book study groups.

Other recommendations provided by respondents that the researcher did not classify as common themes were as follows:

1. Create a change in culture.
2. Work with colleges.
3. Create common language and expectations.
4. Provide funding for time to implement.
5. Allow time to process new information.
6. Provide student grading programs (e.g. Infinite Campus) to effectively communicate the meaning of grades to parents and students.
7. Pilot a program.
8. Create standardized grading rubrics.
9. Implement and don’t wait for “buy-in” or a change will likely not take place.

The researcher hypothesized that respondents would offer a number of recommendations for the implementation of standards-based grading that were not identified by the researcher or included in the study's review of literature.

Summary

Chapter IV provided the findings from the online survey of 93 principals serving secondary schools in Minnesota. The purpose of the study's questions was to gather the principals' perceptions regarding the implementation of standards-based grading in Minnesota secondary schools.

The data presented in Table 4.4 of the study indicate that principals who participated in the study perceive standards-based grading has benefits in secondary education. Moreover, the principals in the study identified benefits of standards-based grading in an open-ended response. However, as illustrated in Table 4.3, principals who participated in the study also reported agreement with eight of the ten statements that cited barriers to the implementation of standards-based grading. The study's participants revealed a low rate of implementation of standards-based grading in their schools. Nine of the 93 participants or 9.7% in the study identified full implementation of standards-based grading or a formal process to implementation had been initiated in their schools. The principals in the study affirmed a paradox: they agreed standards-based grading had benefits yet they have reported a low rate of implementation of standards-based grading in their secondary schools.

Chapter V: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to examine the reported extent of implementation of standards-based grading in select Minnesota secondary schools (grades 7-12) and the benefits and barriers to implementation. The researcher surveyed Minnesota public school principals who served secondary schools (grades 7-12). The study examined Minnesota secondary schools' (including grades 7-12) implementation of standards-based grading, and those principals' perceptions of the benefits of standards-based grading and barriers to implementation using a mixed-methods research design. It was believed the study could assist school leaders in their implementation of standards-based grading and, moreover, assist school administrators, professors of education administration, and researchers create professional development programs or modules to guide school leaders in the design and implementation of successful standards-based grading systems.

Chapter V provides recommendations and conclusions based on Chapter IV findings, the research design, limitations of the study, recommendations for further research, and recommendations for future practices.

Research Questions

1. What were the perceived barriers reported by select Minnesota secondary school principals in the implementation of a standards-based grading system in secondary schools?
2. What were the perceived benefits reported by select Minnesota secondary school principals in the implementation of a standards-based grading system in secondary schools?

3. What methods did select Minnesota secondary school principals perceive resulted in the successful implementation of a standards-based grading system in their secondary schools?
4. What recommendations did select Minnesota secondary school principals offer as strategies for the successful implementation of standards-based grading in their secondary schools?

Discussion and Conclusions

Research Question 1. Study participants were asked to report or state their levels of agreement or disagreement with ten statements the researcher ascertained through a literature review as common barriers to implementation of standards-based grading. The barriers were posed only to study participants who had identified their schools as having not implemented or been involved in a formal process of implementation of standards-based grading.

The results of the question revealed that principals perceived the barrier with the highest rate of agreement (mean = 2.99) was that post-secondary institutions require high school transcripts that report traditional grades (A-F) and grade point averages (GPA). Limited professional development for educators (mean = 2.95) and reprisals from parents and the community in the change to standards-based grading (mean = 2.83) were also highly rated barriers.

Respondents were also asked to provide perceived barriers to the implementation of standards-based grading not provided by the researcher. The predominant responses offered by the respondents included staff "buy-in" and support, staff development for educators, and parent and community support.

As reported by the study's participants, these perceived barriers to standards-based grading implementation were found to be consistent with the research. Peters and Buckmiller (2015) reported in their study that two of the main barriers to implementation of standards-based grading were parent and community concerns about GPA, class rank, college admission status, and scholarships. Furthermore, schools that implemented standards-based grading received disapproval from parents and the community specifically through petitions, social media, or public meetings, causing some to subsequently discontinue the practice (Dexter, 2015; Engler, 2013; Kelley, 2015; Rado; 2016; Washuk, 2015).

Respondents reported disagreement with two barriers of implementation of standards-based grading. First, respondents disagreed it was a barrier that limited evidence existed that standards-based grading improves student achievement (mean = 2.26). Researchers (Hamilton et al., 2008; Marzano, 2010; Welsh et al., 2013) had indicated that no major studies have been published to support standards-based grading as improving student achievement. Other researchers (Pollio & Hochbein, 2015; Rosales, 2013) determined students demonstrated academic achievement after standards-based grading implementation but could not definitively attribute that academic achievement to the implementation of standards-based grading.

Second, respondents disagreed that the difficulty in determining the meaning of proficiency for teachers to provide a grade to students was a barrier to the implementation of standards-based grading. Hamilton et al. (2008) reported a common criticism among state accountability systems was the differing meanings of "proficient" when reporting student learning (p. 6). Ritterband and Heller (2015) reported that schools in Maine were applying for an extension to a 2018 requirement for high schools to provide students a proficiency

diploma. The reason for the application for the extension was that educators were struggling with "defining and assessing proficiency" (p. 4).

Research Question 2. Study participants were asked to cite their levels of agreement or disagreement with a four statements that the researcher ascertained through a literature review as common benefits to implementation of standards-based grading. Among the four statements regarding implementation of standards-based grading, all received mean scores of greater than 2.50, exhibiting respondents' agreement that the statements reflected benefits. The predominant reported benefit of standards-based grading was "Reduction or elimination of grading practices such as assigning zero points for a grade for missing work, averaging grades, using a bell curve, or grading based on student behavioral characteristics (late work, missing work, etc.)" (mean = 3.48). The benefit with the lowest mean score was "Increase in student achievement" (mean = 3.01). No respondents indicated strongly disagreeing with any of the four benefit statements. In addition, what students were to learn and what students did learn were dominant themes gleaned from statements provided by respondents as benefits of standards-based grading.

Eighty-eight percent of respondents reported at least a beginner level of understanding (understanding the concept or have general knowledge) of standards-based grading, while 12.0% of respondents reported novice knowledge (limited experience with or knowledge of the topic). No respondents reported knowing nothing of the topic. Because principals who participated in the survey cited agreement with the benefits of standards-based grading, this affirmed a paradox between standards-based grading benefits and their implementation. That is, there is agreement that standards-based grading is beneficial, but there is a minimum number of Minnesota secondary schools reporting its implementation. The percentage of

respondents who indicated their schools implemented or a formal process had begun to implement standards-based grading numbered only 9.7.

Research Question 3. Respondents were asked to identify those methods of implementation of standards-based grading they perceived as most beneficial. Nine or 9.7% of the respondents indicated having implemented or started a formal process to implement standards-based grading. Study findings indicated there was agreement that all four provided methods helped in the implementation of standards-based grading.

Respondents affirmed that the four recommended methods for standards-based grading implementation assisted in the transition to a standards-based grading. Creating a clear reporting schematic or report card that was user friendly to teachers and parents (mean = 3.75); establishing clear standards of learning on which to base grades (mean = 3.50); communicating a clear purpose for grading to staff and community (mean = 3.44); and creating clear performance indicators for student learning (mean = 3.25) all received mean scores above 2.50, establishing agreement.

A conclusion drawn from responses to the question was that researchers' recommendations to educational leaders as methods for implementing standards-based grading were also perceived by leaders as benefits to the implementation process.

Research Question 4. Respondents provided suggestions for school leaders to consider in implementing standards-based grading. The question was posed to gather possible recommendations not considered or provided in previous literature or research. Common themes that emerged included adequate staff training and planning and proper communication of the grading change to parents and the community. Although these were not different from predominant recommendations referenced in the study, respondents emphasized the

importance of these themes when leaders implement standards-based grading in their schools. Less common thematic recommendations included leaders modeling implementation after other school districts, establishing the content students should learn before implementation, establishing clear meanings of grades that teachers provide to students, and researching standards-based grading.

Cited below are other recommendations respondents provided that the researcher did not identify as common themes. These recommendations should be considered as educational practitioners provide resources to leaders who intend to implement standards-based grading:

1. Create a change in culture.
2. Work with colleges.
3. Create common language and expectations.
4. Provide funding for time to implement.
5. Allow time to process new information.
6. Provide student grading programs (e.g. Infinite Campus) to effectively communicate the meaning of grades to parents and students.
7. Pilot a program.
8. Create standardized grading rubrics.
9. Implement and don't wait for "buy-in" or a change will likely not take place

Limitations

Roberts (2010) defined limitations of a study as "features of your study that you know may negatively affect the results of your study or your ability to generalize...areas over which you have no control" (p. 162). Limitations of the study included the following:

- The survey results were limited due to a lower participation rate. The survey was distributed to 603 secondary school principals who were members of the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) listserv. There were 93 completed surveys, equating to a 15.5% return rate.
- The study's survey was distributed to participants on October 3, 2017, and two reminders were distributed on October 10, 2017 and October 20, 2017. The survey closed on October 31, 2017. Had the survey been distributed earlier in the school year, more principals may have participated.
- Research in the literature review was limited to findings from the researcher.
- Because of the lower response rate, the study did not gather a high rate of feedback from secondary school principals who reported having implemented or being involved in a formal process of implementing of standards-based grading. As a result, the study did not secure a high rate of feedback from secondary school principals regarding methods that made the implementation of standards-based grading successful in their schools.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based upon the findings of the study, the following recommendations are offered for further research of the topic:

1. Due to the study's limitation of a lower response rate (15.5%), it is recommended that a survey of secondary school principals be conducted in September or that an incentive be provided for their completion of the survey. The study's survey was conducted from October 3 through October 31, 2017. It is believed a more

favorable response rate from secondary school principals could have been achieved during September.

2. It is recommended a study be replicated throughout the United States to gather a broader sample of secondary school principals' perceptions of the implementation of standards-based grading.
3. It is recommended a study be instituted to make comparisons of principals' perceptions of standards-based grading between and among states.
4. It is recommended a study be undertaken to compare principals' knowledge of standards-based grading and their perceptions of the benefits and barriers to the implementation of standards-based grading.
5. It is recommended a case study be conducted at a single secondary school that has implemented standards-based grading to provide a model to guide other school leaders in their implementation of standards-based grading in their school districts.
6. The study's literature review revealed the existence of limited research that provides evidence standards-based grading improves student achievement. It is recommended a study be conducted to determine whether or not standards-based grading improves student achievement as measured on standardized-state accountability assessments or on local assessments at the secondary level.
7. The study identified barriers to the implementation of standards based grading. Based on those barriers which received high rates of agreement from respondents, it is recommended a study be undertaken to investigate measures which can be undertaken to resolve the perceived barriers. For example, the study found principals' perceived at a high level the following barriers to implementation of

standards-based grading: post-secondary institutions require high school transcripts that report traditional grade and grade-point averages; limited professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators to learn how to implement standards-based grading; and agreement about the contents and construction of report cards.

8. It is recommended a case study or survey be conducted with school leaders and teachers at secondary schools where standards-based grading was implemented to determine those barriers they encountered and how they overcame those barriers.
9. It is recommended a study be conducted to determine whether principals' reported level of knowledge of standards-based grading has significance as to whether standards-based grading is implemented in their schools.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Based on the results of the study, the following are recommended for further consideration by school district leaders, university professors involved in training educators, and educational practitioners offering professional development for educators:

1. A predominant barrier to implementation reported by respondents in the study was a lack of professional development (mean = 2.95). It is recommended that educational leaders in secondary schools and professors at colleges and universities who are training current and future educators offer further staff development and education in standards-based grading.
2. It is recommended that college and university administrators communicate to secondary school leaders whether student admission requirements, such as GPA (grade point average), class rank, and traditional letter grades (A-F), are required

of students to be admitted into their institutions. This will assist school leaders to determine whether or not standards-based grading in high schools would assist or hinder students' admissions acceptance into post-secondary institutions.

3. Furthermore, it is recommended that secondary school leaders communicate their desire to use standards-based grading in their secondary schools to college and university administrators in order for the colleges' and universities' administrators to prepare for students' admission requirements from a standards-based report card.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to examine the reported level of implementation of standards-based grading in select Minnesota secondary schools (grades 7-12) as well as to identify the benefits and barriers to implementation. The study explored select Minnesota secondary schools' (including grades 7-12) implementation of standards-based grading, those strategies that caused implementation to be successful, and those principals' perceptions of the benefits of standards-based grading and barriers to implementation. The study's results contribute to further research on the status of standards-based grading in Minnesota secondary schools. Specifically, the study affirmed that Minnesota secondary school principals perceived standards-based grading was a beneficial grading system, though, respondents also affirmed the presence of many barriers to implementation of standards-based grading. Those barriers will require further research and the formation of additional recommendations on the implementation of standards-based grading in Minnesota secondary schools.

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Appendix A: Survey Instrument via Survey Monkey

Consent to Participate

* You are invited to participate in a research study about your perceptions of implementation of standards based grading at secondary (grades 7-12) public schools. You were selected to be part of this study because you are a secondary school (grades 7-12) principal who is part of the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) list serve. The research study is being conducted by Michael Scott to satisfy the requirements for the degree of Doctorate in Educational Administration and Leadership at St. Cloud State University. The survey should take approximately five to ten minutes to complete.

If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to indicate your perceptions ranging from strongly agree, agree, disagree, to strongly disagree and provide statements regarding the implementation of standards-based grading. In addition, you may include in writing any further information in regard to standards-based grading implementation at the secondary school level.

Benefits of the research include finding common reasons as to why standards-based grading at secondary schools isn't implemented at a high rate and the reported number of secondary schools in Minnesota who have implemented standards-based grading. In addition, educational practitioners who are writing about how to implement standards-based grading may want to use the information from this study to determine what secondary school principals may need as support in the implementation process.

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with your participation in this research study.

Data collected will remain confidential. Data will be reported and presented with no more than two descriptors presented together.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with St. Cloud State University or the researcher. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

If you have questions about this research study, you may contact principal investigator Michael Scott at mdscott@stcloudstate.edu or faculty advisor Dr. Kay Worner at ktworner@stcloudstate.edu. Results of the study can be requested from the researcher, Michael Scott, at mdscott@stcloudstate.edu or upon publication from the St. Cloud State University Repository.

Your completion of the survey indicates that you are at least 18 years of age and that you consent to participate in the study.

Thank you,
Michael Scott

- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree

* Please indicate the grade level of your school:

- ◯ High School
- ◯ Middle School
- ◯ ALC/ALP
- ◯ Other (please specify)

* What is your level of understanding of standards-based grading?

- ◯ I know nothing of the topic
- ◯ Novice (I have limited experience with or knowledge of the topic)
- ◯ Beginner (I understand the concept/have general knowledge of the topic)
- ◯ Proficient (I had some training and understand the components of implementation)
- ◯ Expert (I had extensive training and could provide implementation training to other schools)

Please indicate, in your perception, whether or not the following items A through D are benefits to standards-based grading:

* A. Clear meaning of grades for students and parents:

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

* B. Provides beneficial information for formulating goals and plans for students with an IEP, 504 plan, or for EL students' progress goals.

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

* C. Reduction or elimination of grading practices such as assigning zero points for a grade for missing work, averaging grades, using a bell curve, or grading based on student behavioral characteristics (late work, missing work, etc.) :

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

* D. Increase in student achievement.

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

* Please provide any other perceived benefits to implementation of standards-based grading.

* I currently serve as a principal of a secondary school building where standards-based grading has been fully implemented (to the stage of reporting grades using a standards-based report card) or is involved in a formal process of implementation.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Please indicate the level of agreement or disagreement on each item A through J as a possible reasons on why standards-based grading has not been implemented in your school:

* A. There is limited evidence that standards-based grading improves student achievement.

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

* B. Traditional grading (grading using A-F) has a strong foundation in education to support a change to standards-based grading.

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

* C. Limited professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators to learn how to implement standards-based grading.

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

* D. In standards-based grading, it is difficult to determine what proficiency actually means in order to post a grade of proficiency.

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

* E. Possible reprisal from parents or the community.

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

* F. Post-secondary institutions require high school transcripts that report traditional (grades A-F) grades and a GPA (grade point average).

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

* G. Student data systems are not configured appropriately to allow teachers to report grades in a standards-based manner.

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

* H. Unknown consequences of changing to standards-based grading.

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

* I. Agreement on what standards-based report cards should contain.

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

* J. Agreement on how report cards should be constructed.

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

* Indicate which grade levels in your school that have fully implemented standards-based grading or where a formal process of implementation of standards-based grading has begun:

What methods of implementation in items A through D do you perceive helped to make the transition to fully implement or begin to implement standards-based grading successful in your school?

* A. Communicating a clear purpose for grading to our staff and community/parents.

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree
- ◯ We have only begun the process, so I can't answer this yet.

* B. Establishing clear standards of learning in which to base our grades.

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree
- ◯ We have only begun the process, so I can't answer this yet.

* C. Creating a clear reporting schematic/report card that was user friendly for teachers and parents.

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree
- ◯ We have only begun the process, so I can't answer this yet.

* D. Establishing clear performance indicators (e.g. does not meet; partially meets; meets; exceeds)

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree
- ◯ We have only begun the process, so I can't answer this yet.

* Please provide any other perceived barriers to implementation of standards-based grading.

* Please include recommendations for the successful implementation of standards-based grading at secondary schools.

Appendix B: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval Letter

ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY
EDUCATION FOR LIFE.

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
720 4th Avenue South AS 210, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

Name: Michael Scott

Email: mdscott@stcloudstate.edu

IRB PROTOCOL DETERMINATION:
Expedited Review-1

Co-Investigator Roger Worner

Project Title: Study of Secondary School Principals' Perceptions of Implementation of Standards-Based Grading and Reporting at Minnesota Secondary Schools

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol to conduct research involving human subjects. Your project has been: **APPROVED**

Please note the following important information concerning IRB projects:

- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of participants in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).

- For expedited or full board review, the principal investigator must submit a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated on this letter to report conclusion of the research or request an extension.

-Exempt review only requires the submission of a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated in this letter if an extension of time is needed.

- Approved consent forms display the official IRB stamp which documents approval and expiration dates. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.

- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc.). The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

If we can be of further assistance, feel free to contact the IRB at 320-308-4932 or email ResearchNow@stcloudstate.edu and please reference the SCSU IRB number when corresponding.

IRB Chair:

Dr. Benjamin Witts
Associate Professor- Applied Behavior Analysis
Department of Community Psychology,Counseling, and Family Therapy

IRB Institutional Official:

Dr. Latha Ramakrishnan
Interim Associate Provost for Research
Dean of Graduate Studies

OFFICE USE ONLY

SCSU IRB# 1739 - 2193	**Type:** Expedited Review-1	**Today's Date:** 9/14/2017
1st Year Approval Date: 9/14/2017	**2nd Year Approval Date:**	**3rd Year Approval Date:**
1st Year Expiration Date: 9/13/2018	**2nd Year Expiration Date:**	**3rd Year Expiration Date:**

Appendix C: Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals Letter of Support

Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals

1667 Snelling Avenue North • Suite C-100 • St. Paul, MN 55108-2131 • 651-999-7333 • 1-800-430-6716 • massp.org

Executive Director
Dave Adney

Attorney/Lobbyist
Roger Aronson

Coordinator of Student Activities
Doug Erickson

Office Manager
Renee LeForte

Finance and Membership Manager
Patti Anderson

To Whom It May Concern,

The Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals, (MASSP) has agreed to sponsor the research being conducted by Michael Scott as part of the requirements for his Doctorate in Educational Leadership. Mr. Scott will be conducting a survey of head secondary principals who are members of the MASSP. MASSP will be providing Mr. Scott with the e-mail contacts of our active members for the purpose of this survey. MASSP will also be providing an introductory letter when Mr. Scott launches his survey in the fall of 2017 so that our members know that MASSP is in support of this research/survey.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate in contacting me.

Sincerely,

David Adney
Executive Director
Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals

Appendix D: Email Invitation and Reminder Emails to Participate in Survey

Initial Email to participate in survey, October 3, 3017
MASSP Members,

The Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals, (MASSP) has agreed to sponsor the research being conducted by Michael Scott, Director of Teaching and Learning at Hutchinson Public Schools, as part of the requirements for his Doctorate in Educational Administration & Leadership through St. Cloud State University. Michael will be conducting a survey of head middle school and high school principals who are members of the MASSP to determine implementation of standards-based grading, specifically barriers and successes of implementation. Results of this survey will be made available to participants once he has completed his degree. We hope that these results will help principals and educational practitioners in their implementation of standards-based grading.
The link to the survey is listed below. All responses are anonymous and the survey should take approximately five to ten minutes to complete.

Survey Link

Reminder Email #1 to complete the survey, October 11, 2017
MASSP Members,

The Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals, (MASSP) has agreed to sponsor the research being conducted by Michael Scott, Director of Teaching and Learning at Hutchinson Public Schools, as part of the requirements for his Doctorate in Educational Administration & Leadership through St. Cloud State University. Michael will be conducting a survey of head middle school and high school principals who are members of the MASSP to determine implementation of standards-based grading, specifically barriers and successes of implementation. Results of this survey will be made available to participants once he has completed his degree. We hope that these results will help principals and educational practitioners in their implementation of standards-based grading.

This is a reminder message. Thank you to those who have already completed the survey.

All responses are anonymous and the survey should take approximately **five** minutes to complete.

Survey Link
Reminder Email #2 to complete the survey, October 25, 2017
Dear MASSP member,

This is my 3rd and final request enlisting your help in gathering information from head middle school and high school principals to determine implementation of standards-based grading, specifically barriers and successes of implementation.

If you have already filled out this survey, thank you. All responses are anonymous and the survey should take approximately **five** minutes to complete.

The survey window will close Monday, October 30th

Survey Link

Appendix E: Survey Comments Coding Worksheet of Perceived Barriers to Implementation of Standards-Based Grading

Perceived barriers to implementation of standards-based grading.	**Parents/ Community**	**Stakeholder Buy-in / time for this**	**Status Quo/ tradition**	**Post-Secondary**	**Staff Development Needs**	**Grading System**	**Fear of Change**	**NA**	**Misc.**
Preserving the status quo			x						
I think you identified many of them. To me the greatest barriers are parents/community and their understanding of best practices.	x								
survey questions contained the main barriers								x	
Getting all staff and parents on board	x	x							
We have to create a Standards Based Mindset with our teaching staff before we can move forward.		x							
Our school went to the first step of no zeroes, retakes, common assessments but need to have the support of more systems to fully implement standards based grading; specifically our reporting out of grades.		x							
What does a teacher do with students who accelerate their learning far in advance of their classmates?									What to do with a student who accelerates
college				x					
The biggest argument against standards-based grading in our senior high is the final college-bound transcript.				x					
Not all content area teachers on board.		x							
none at this time								x	
Teacher buy in - District level buy in		x							
N/A								x	
Your last set of questions were perfect.								x	
The community is used to grade based report cards and would require a lot of information about what standards-based grading is and how it is beneficial. Also, teachers would need staff development that is funded.	x				x				
We still have a lot of work to do determining what we want students to know and be able to do and how we will determine that before we report out the results.					x				
Time to train and implement					x				
New is tough.							x		
Lack of knowledge and trainers in the District and the high school.					x				
No sure.								x	
I believe you covered the basics.								x	
Not done at Secondary level in our area.								x	
Parents want to see a grade and that is an issue	x		x						

none								x	
We need to make sure we explain the new grading system to students, parents and staff. You need long-range plan to implement standards-based grading. You need to be prepared for opposition and make sure you have key staff members on board to start.	x	x			x				
None at this time.								x	
Our school system is in year three of implementing SBT&L and working developing the curriculum before going to the grading structure.								x	
none								x	
this is a complete switch in philosophical practices. It would take many discussions, time, practice and training for a district that is in favor of do standards based training. Our district is divided on the subject. Teacher preparation programs need to start the change. Having young teachers who really understand the process and have experienced teaching under standards based would be priceless! In my experience, many older teachers often have a difficult time understanding what "differentiated teacing [sic] strategies" are and how to incorporate assessment as such. The older teachers oft are more resistant to change. Also, many teachers are taught to be practicioners [sic] not curriculum specialists. For those who understand (fully) assement [sic], teaching, curriculum, it comes easier. For those who are truly, trained practicioners [sic] of packaged curriculum, they struggle thinking outside of that box.		x			x				
Parents don't understand standards based grading.	x								
Not enough information					x				
X								x	
NA								x	
I don't believe most parents want that much detail.	x								
Parent and staff pushback of not understanding how standards based grading will look and be implemented.	x								
This is related to the professional development answer, but the time necessary to collaborate to move to SBG can be a challenge.					x				
Shear number of standards in many content areas. Teachers don't see the benefit.		x							
Our staff our doing these practices but then have to convert to a percent grade because of our large district						x			

software system and report cards that are out of our control.									
A-F grading chagne [sic]						x			
I think the biggest challenge for us is that our students are very mobile, so we need our grading to translate smoothly into someone else's system. In addition, we haven't done the PR and prep work to get students ready for this type of learning.						x			
The work is challenging at the HS level. There simply isn't enough time to focus and follow up on too many things. SBG has to be your thing!					x				
Many staff members feel the standard based grading is a passing phase. They feel like they have		x							
Too many teachers feel that homework should be part of a grade. They feel that extra credit work can be a good motivator.						x			
community understanding	x								
Tradition Time			x						
Everyone knows the "game" of how to get good grades. However, that does not mean they have had true learning. I want a pilot to fly a plane that I am on who has learned the act of flying a plane. Not someone who has an "A" for a grade in flying but no proof of actually doing it.						x			
NA								x	
Your list of barriers was comprehensive. The only other one I could offer is a limited familiarity of SBG across different communities. Local media has not followed the positive changes this shift can have in student learning.									
?								x	
Teacher understanding of standards and how to assess them					x				
Getting staff, students, and parents on board takes a long time.		x							
We are beginning the process. Resistance of teachers to change grading practices. Teachers need training and time to create rubrics connected to standards.		x			x				
Does not match the philosophy of our school.			x						
none								x	
GPA						x			

Staff not in agreement about standards based grading. Parents not supporting it. Students not understanding how they are being graded.	x	x				x			
Fear of change.							x		

Prioritization of tasks and initiatives. There are other efforts that have taken priority.		x							
None. The main barrier is the trench that postsecondary systems hold us to with GPA, class rank, etc...				x					
Communication and access to learning... people don't know what they don't know... hence, consideration for system wide learning at all levels of the organization requires a fair amount of time and resources.		x			x				
Tradition within the community and some very veteran staff	x	x	x						
Resistance to change by teachers		x							
none								x	
none								x	
Staff perception and changing their indoctrination.		x					x		
Professional development for staff related to the shift regarding reporting out about student learning.					x				
Lack of understanding by parents.	x								
GPA for post secondary institutions				x					
Familiarity with current system			x						
none not commented on before								x	
Classroom level assessment questions are not yet clearly aligned to standards. Rubrics have not been created identifying what proficient work might look like.					x				
Post secondary institutions.				x					
.								x	
There seems to be a large gap between a 4 and 3. Students that come from the elementary and have met standard and come to our building and get B's and C's. Those parents are not happy that the reporting didn't reflect the level.					x				
*								x	
Time									Time
We have historically been a consensus building. People are afraid to pursue things they don't know. Also, SBG can be an increased amount of work - afraid of increased workload (with 180 students across 5 preps)...		x							
- gathering consensus within the teaching staff for change - the willingness of teachers to radically change a grading system they have used for years.		x					x		

Smaller schools lack the resources to implement effectively. For example, a large metro school will have the funding for hallway monitors, automated phone calling, and teacher-duty time for supervision. A smaller school with lower funding levels will not have funding for supervision, so the use of attendance/participation in					x				

grading is important to the daily operations of the school. I would expect truancy to sky rocket if we implemented standards-based grading in our school.									

Appendix F: Survey Comments Coding Worksheet of Perceived Benefits to Implementation of Standards-Based Grading

Perceived benefits to implementation of Standards-Based Grading	Students learn at own pace	Clarity of grades	Progress grades and Content Align	Clarity/ Focus of what is to be learned	Clarity of what students learned	Increase student achieve-ment	Student not penalized	Teacher account -ability	NA	Misc.
I haven't seen it used in a high school setting so it is hard for me to answer this question at this time.									x	
I would just like to add two comments from the questions above, I agree with b but I disagree in the fact that it is beneficial to these groups of students, it would help all students set their goals. For the last one, increase student achievement, I agree but it will only increase if the learning goals are clearly communicated to the students and the feedback is given to the students regarding their progress to the intended outcome. Standard based grading will not increase student achievement alone, it is the student's role in the grading that will increase achievement in my opinion along with increase motivation if the students are owning their learning and receiving the help they need along with the way.	x			x		x				Help all students to learn
Eventual increase in student achievement - not immediate results.						x				
clarity in measuring mastery of learning targets					x					
Allows for students to learn at different places without being penalized	x						x			
Students are allowed to be assessed on their most recent evidence of their learning and not graded on whether they learn it fast, but that they learned it at a profecient [sic] level. It also supports the idea that students are given chances for re-learning and get full credit for concepts learned.	x	x					x			relearning can occur
We are grading what students know not what they don't know or what they missed. Common		x			x					

understanding of what constitutes a grade among staff, students and families										
Students get to advance at their own pace.	x									
clear learning expectations [sic]					x					
Common grading expectations across content areas.		x								
Provides students ample opportunities to show mastery of standards.	x									
Nothing to add									x	
Student voice and choice is essential.	x									
Paints a better picture of student understanding.					x					
N/A									x	
More work for Union tchrs [sic] without a hige [sic] benefit to learning...										More work for teacher
Lessons would have to focus on student learning that uses content to develop skills instead of learning content for content's sake.				x						
I have nothing to add									x	
Na									x	
In my opinion it would allow a much better understanding of how proficient students are at a certain academic objective.					x					
NA									x	
Might increase attendance as well										Increase student attendance
Specific understanding of what needs to be "learned" taught.				x						
It is a yes or no grading system										yes/no grading
I think it will create less cheating since students have to shoe [sic] mastery.										Less cheating
Knowing if a student has learned something					x					
The major benefit is that students are held accountable for the core class standards when calculating the class grade. .							x			
None at this time.									x	
N/A									x	
When our district went to standards-based grading we				x		x		x		

quickly learned that we can't assess standards if we don't know the standards and if instruction isn't supporting the standards. It really helped us in being accountable to the essential learning in each class and we have been able to have a guaranteed, viable curriculum at each grade level that truly is articulated and taught. Teachers do a lot of "stuff" that is nice to do and this has allowed us to get very clear and focused on what is essential. As we have had focus on essential learning, our academic achievement for EACH student has greatly improved.										
Greater alignment to post-secondary structure of assessments carrying larger weights. Formative assessment being valued as practice and a safe place to make mistakes rather than high stakes.	x									Aligned to post-secon-dary structure
Correlates better to what students know at the end of a unit rather than throughout.					x					
good to revisit grading as a whole		x								
Benfefits [sic] include all stakeholders understanding what and why they are learning various curricular content, individualized interaction with the material. I "TRUE" reading on how well a student understands content.				x	x					
More potential for consistency across teachers and buildings.								x		
In theory it is great, however there is a lot to change to make it work.									x	
Helpful for everyone involved to see what the student has completed and what needs to be done				x	x					
I am limited in my knowledge about it and thus do not have an answer for this required question.									x	
Align grading to curriculum			x							
none									x	
Schools should eliminate grade levels and graduate students based on meeting standards required for graduation.	x									Graduate based on meeting standards
Aligned practices between teachers lead to increased effectiveness in many areas.								x		
Not sure									x	

Help ensure curriculum taught aligns with content area standards.				x				x		
More accurate grades based on learning			x							
Clearly communicates what students know.					x					
The transition to standards-based grading is often very hard for staff, students, and families, and seeing the benefits doesn't happen for a while because of the challenges to existing mindsets.									x	
I think SBG will generally lead to more motivation in a school that implements these ideas long-term.										Motivation increase
deeper student knowledge										Deeper student know-ledge
It provides a clear picture of what the student is able to do.				x						
Standards based grading can bring on a new set of problems for those students who can't quite meet the standards so we adjust for them.	x									
what students can do				x						
Our district is highly traditional. Patrons would not want to change to this at the HS level. Staff would not want to incorporate a duel system. My opinion, it would be a waste of time.										waste of time
Full alignment, horizontally across systems.			x							
No comment									x	
NA									x	
Helps ensure that curriculum is aligned with important state standards. Forces teachers to let go of "pet"units.			x					x		
?									x	

More specific feedback to student on their progress that will allow them to move forward on an individual skill					x					
Allowing students multiple opportunities to demonstrate understanding without being penalized for not knowing while in the initial learning phases.	x									
focus on student learning of standards				x						

Clear rubrics outlining skills students have mastered.					x					
Consistency in grading practices with alignment to set standards.			x							
Allows for individualization of curriculum	x									
More individualized and opportunity to learn what we need students to learn.	x									
Clear learning objectives				x						
Alloa;;waeojf [sic]									x	
Better communication of what is being learned.					x					
Forces staff to align written, taught, and assessed curriculum.								x		
The best parts are the clarity it provides for education consumers (Parents/Students) and for providers (teachers) who are developing, aligning, and teaching the curriculum.				x						
1) Alignment of grading practices across classrooms creates greater consistency and eliminates the 'easy' teacher/'hard' teacher issue in the same course. 2) Typically eliminates 'busy work'			x					x		Eliminates busy work
mastery of of uderstanding [sic] v. playing the game of school				x						
Student grades have a stronger correlation to standardized testing and college entrance exams results.		x								
Moves teachers and schools in the directions of the important standards (Powered or I can statements) truly have meaning and are the focus of our curriculum.				x						
Grades are more accurate.		x								
The separation of behavior and academics is a major bonus, along with moving away from grading for sorting purposes rather than for learning.		x								
Helps the student to have a greater understanding of their progress in their own learning.					x					
Increase in level or academic rigor.										Rigor increase
Implementing a lot more formative assessments prior to taking a summative. Now I can look at a grade and know exactly where a student is. I also have a strong believe in reteach and retakes.	x									Use of formative assessment

Grades represent what you can actually demonstrate you know		x								
Don't know enough to comment									x	
.									x	
NA									x	
.									x	
Keeps teachers and students focused on the standards				x						
Fidelity of Implementation of standards.								x		
NC									x	
SBG recognizes that students learn at different paces, and allows for individualized instruction and "recovery" of the learning throughout the process.	x									
Consistent grading amongst teachers of the same subject			x							
Can potentially reduce parent complaints.										Reduce parent complaints
none									x	

Appendix G: Survey Comments Coding Worksheet of Recommendations for the Successful Implementation of Standards-Based Grading at Secondary Schools

Recommendations for the successful implementation of standards-based grading at secondary schools.	Staff Training/ Planning	Communication to Community	Model schools that implemented	Establish what is to be learned first	Clear on meaning of grades	Supportive Research/ Book study	NA	Misc.
Unsure							x	
We did a book study with a team of teachers in the 2016-2017 school year that moved teachers in the direction of looking into implementation. We also offered two sessions of training this past summer. Staff are currently using the previous method of grading but completing the work to implement next school year.	x					x		
x							x	
model implementation after schools who have demonstrated successful implementation			x					
Need to create a culture for change								Create change culture
First best instruction and then work toward the standards based mindset and instruction. Read Tom Schimmers "grading practices from the inside out."	x					x		
It takes a long time for people to understand and our high educational institutions along with our valedictorian statuses make instituting standards at the high school level much higher than the middle school level. At our MS we also got rid of GPA's, honor rolls and implemented more of a grade wide celebration system.		x						
Eliminates units being taught that are only taught because the teachers really likes to do it verse, what do we really want students to know?				x				
work with colleges								Work with colleges
Common language and expectations must be in place to proceed.								Common expectations
N/A							x	
none at this time							x	
Extensive training for all staff.	x							
Communication with parents has to be a priority.		x						
N/A							x	
Trendy and Charter schools can go for it Show ACT improvement because of it and how colleges Nation Wide will fully accept it and the buy in would be tremendous						x		
To transition to standards-based grading, teachers would require time to adjust classroom expectations and lessons. In addition, they would need professional development opportunities and time to implement. Dedicated funding would help to	x							Funding

compensate the teachers for the extra time the transition would take.								
Lay a firm foundation of what students are to know and be able to do and how that will be determined prior to worrying about how it will be reported.				x				
Staff development opportunities	x							
Would like to move in that direction and am curious how others have implemented.							x	
NA							x	
Buy in by the district.		x						
I am not in a place to recommend at this time							x	
More information is needed to everyone.		x						
More training and models that are working in current schools	x		x					
none							x	
Make sure you use common language that will make grading system easy for students and parents to follow. For example, you might need to maintain the normal A-F grading system with the new standardized- based system.					x			
None at this time.							x	
Don't go cold turkey. Run a traditional report card side by side with a new standards based report card to calm families until they are used to the new format.					x			
We established benchmarks that were implemented over the course of three years. Teachers could move more quickly but had to meet benchmarks each year. That really helped us differentiate yet ensure that it was done.	x							
I do not wish to answer this question but the format forces me to type something here.							x	
none							x	
Teacher preparation in college, many hours of training for current staff ~ including various hands on practices and examples, a school board/Superintendent that is willing to consider and learn about standards based grading. Hiring me as a consultant to assist in the movement towards Standards based grading!!! Best Wishes on your Doctorate!	x							
Go slow and allow time for processing of new information.								Allow time
Proficiency and Mastery on standards must be fully explained.				x				
Make information about the topic more available.		x						
X							x	
training and time to change mindsets	x							
none							x	
Staff training and communication with parents.	x	x						
We are beginning our development of SBG. We are doing so through							x	

alignment processes and the development of common, formative, standards-based assessments. From there, I would anticipate that we will move to a more complete implementation of SBS including report cards.								
Must have staff buy in and provide time for teachers to establish what the grade book will look like.	x							
Book reads or bringing in a speaker.	x							
Teacher PD	x							
Student grading programs such as Infinite Campus must create tools to grade in this way, and to effectively communicate the meaning of grades to parents.					x			Student databases must have platform for SBG
Spokane.							x	
better staff development	x							
Getting teachers' buy-in and not rushing into it.	x							
Parent meetings explaining it. I can see issues with IEPs and the power of Special Ed.		x						
solid models, student management systems that work with the standards-based grading.			x					Student databases must have platform for SBG
Lots and lots and lots and lots of education to the public and to the teaching staff. Long process.	x	x						
I would read the book "A Repair Kit For Grading" by Ken O'Connor.	x							
No comment							x	
NA							x	
Ample Staff Development Comprehensive Planning Thorough Communication to kids and families	x							
?							x	
Developing a deeper understanding of the Grading for Learning process	x	x						
Accumulate a preponderance of evidence supporting the move to SBG. Include teachers in the research and learning phases, and use their voices to communicate understanding with invested parties such as parents and school board members. Start with your "why" to help in developing understanding amongst students, parents, staff and the community. Implement a tiered plan to fully support early adopters, and use data/evidence to drive the movement forward.						x		
We have taken slow starting with exploring what others are doing, educating staff and having discussions, piloting, and slowly moving towards making a decision.	x		x					Pilot a program
We are moving slowly on purpose to give our teachers time to determine power standards and create rubrics. Teachers need training and time.	x			x				
We don't specifically implement so no recommendations.							x	
Standardized rubrics								rubrics

start slow and a lot of explanation to the community		x						
Training needed	x							
Having staff on the same page. Having good rubrics	x							rubrics
Review of current research and data.	x							
Ensure teachers understand "why" this is better prior to telling them "what" to do... It's a big change.	x							
Need to implement and train on standard based teaching and learning before trying to implement standard based grading. If done correctly on the front end, the grading should take care of itself.	x							
Just do it...waiting for consensus or 'buy-in' will result in the 'this too shall pass' philosophy to likely impede or eliminate an educationally appropriate shift to take place.								Just implement
I've not done this							x	
A significant amount of professional development and tons of communication with students and parents.	x	x						
none							x	
none							x	
Training and research are key.	x							
Plan and allow time for understanding before implementing.	x							
Quality staff learning will be necessary.	x							
Transparent and planned study.	x							
No opinion, don't support this concept in HS setting							x	
Go slow to go fast. Communications and consistency is key.		x						
Professional Development	x							
none that I'm aware of							x	
.							x	
Unknown at this time.							x	
.							x	
We have not, but looked at a district that did. They mentioned communication. I would think that the staff and parents would need to be trained.	x	x						
*							x	
Training	x							
Excellent proactive and ongoing/continuous PD.	x							
- Education for the staff first, education for the community second.	x	x						
I believe the make or break for standards-based grading at the secondary level is the funding of the school(s). If you have funding, you can make any system work. If you do not have the funding, you will need some of the traditional motivators to operate the school effectively and efficiently.								Funding