Dear Cottonwood Condor Parents,

It is always very exciting to start a new school year.  As we start this new year, I would like to discuss significant changes you will see in the student progress-reporting format as well as a new gradebook platform we will be implementing.  I would like to take this opportunity to give you a brief overview of these changes.
During the last five years, Granite School District has been researching proficiency-based grading (PBG) and how students in the district might benefit from a grading system that focuses on their ability to demonstrate their learning and accurately reflects areas of academic strength and weakness.

Because students are proving their skills on individual standards, the grading scale is different from the traditional letter grading scales.  All opportunities to “show what you know” are based on the following 1-4 scale:
    1 – I am just starting to learn this, but don’t understand it completely. (Below proficient)
2 – I can do this with help or an example in front of me, but I may make a mistake. (Approaching Proficiency)
    3 – I can do this on my own without help. (Proficient)
4 – I can show evidence that my understanding has exceeded this expectation AND I would be able to teach someone else how to do it. (Highly Proficient)
Reinforcing practices of Proficiency Based Grading include:
•    Issues of student behavior, participation, punctuality, work timeliness and effort are reflected in a citizenship grade rather than an academic grade.
•    “Extra credit” is not included in the academic grade.
•     Teachers create frequent opportunities for students to demonstrate concept proficiency.
•     Teachers utilize a multitude of evidence in multiple modalities to determine a student’s        level of proficiency: assignments, observations, portfolios, assessments, products, discussions,   projects, performance tasks, etc.
•     Homework is meaningful independent practice which requires time and effort outside the
       classroom and has an articulated purpose tied to content standards but is not scored.
•     Points are not deducted for reasons other than a student’s lack of academic proficiency.
•     Classroom assessments tie directly to specific content standards and objectives.
•     Gradebook is updated regularly to prompt learning and increase proficiency in content standards.

We use grades to show what a student knows and is able to do with respect to classroom content that has been taught.  Proficiency-Based Grading (PBG) is designed to meet these objectives more clearly and thoroughly than a typical letter grade.  The most important thing for parents and students to remember is these numbers DO NOT correspond to a letter grade i.e. 4=A, 3=B, etc.  Letter grades are gone!

The Parent/Student Gradebook view in the student portal will look different also.  As you view your child’s progress, you will see the standards that were taught and are being assessed. Proficiency scores will indicate a student’s progress, a snap shot of that moment in time, towards proficiency using the 1 – 4 scale.  Students are given three opportunities to show mastery before a grade is generated.  To clarify, you will still see all of their assessments and scores as they are entered on gradebook.  You just may not see a number grade assigned until three assessments have been completed. Assessments will include varying modalities and will give students many different ways to show their progress towards proficiency.  At this time, a parent can quickly see if their child has acquired proficiency or if there are areas where more work is needed.

We know and understand that this way of grading is a big change for both students and parents.  Please be patient with us as we transition from our traditional scoring and grading practices and shift to Proficiency Based Grading (PBG).  We anticipate that there might be a few bumps in the road.  We encourage you to ask questions and offer feedback from a parent’s point of view to help us make changes as we go.
Thank you for the opportunity to teach your children.
Regards,

Paulette McMillan
Principal