# Understanding PowerSchool and Competency Grading

## *A guide for Secondary Parents and Students*

Litchfield School District
Fall 2020

# Background Info.

- In Winter 2019/20, the district made the decision to transition to a new Student Information System.  With this shift from Infinite Campus to PowerSchool came the need to look at our grading system and whether we were ready to move to a more common, competency based system in all three schools.

- In early 2020 (prior to the pandemic) our district grading and reporting committee agreed to structure grading in all three schools around competencies.

- Since 2016, the approved Litchfield School District Curriculum in all subjects has been a competency based curriculum.

- Reporting out on competencies has been a state requirement since 2015.

- Last winter, a plan was outlined and presented to the school board.

# What are the Competencies?

- Litchfield has district wide competencies that are applied at all levels.
- Students are expected to demonstrate an independent ability to apply the skills from the competency using the content appropriate for the course/grade level.
- The list of approved competencies can be found here.

# How is Competency Grading different from Traditional Grading?

## Traditional System

- Based on seat time.
- Remembering content.
- Teacher centered.
- Instruction is common.
- Grades are on 100pt scale.
- Grades are typically divided by type of assignment.
- Behaviors and non academic skills are included in grades.

## Competency Based System

- Based on demonstration of proficiency.
- Application of knowledge and skills
- Student centered.
- Instruction is personalized.
- Grades are typically on a 4 point scale.
- Each competency is scored separately to make up course proficiency.
- Behaviors and non academic skills are not included in academic grades.

# How is Competency Grading different from Traditional Grading?

## Traditional System

- Assignments receive a concrete score based on correctness.
- All assignments are included in the average.
- All grades are averaged together to get an overall score.
- Extra credit, participation grades, late work penalties impact the subject/course average.

## Competency Based System

- Assignments receive a score based on level of demonstrated proficiency.
- Only assignments that specifically assess the competency are included.
- The level of competency is based on trends and progress not averages.
- Extra credit, participation scores and other behavioral scores are part of Work Study Practices and don't impact the competency scores.

# How does PowerSchool work with Competency Based Grades in Litchfield?

- All competencies are weighted equally unless otherwise noted.
- The overall course grade is made up of the ***competency scores* NOT *the assignment scores.***
- All assignments are tied to one or more competency and the score on that assignment is made up of separate competency based scores.
- Teachers can enter grades by percentage or by points **BUT** PowerSchool will translate each competency score into a percentage.
- These percentages are averaged to make up the overall competency score for the course.
- **THEN** the Competency Scores are combined to make up the overall course score.

# Sample Calculation #1

Competency 1 - *Students will demonstrate the ability to apply and extend mathematical properties in order to solve problems.* - 50% (of total grade)

Competency 2 - Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate and justify reasoning in order to support mathematical arguments. - 50% (of total grade)

|  | Comp 1 score | Comp 2 score | Assignment Score* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Test 1 | 20/25 (80%) | 6/10 (60%) | 26/35 (74%) |
| Test 2 | 25/25 (100%) | 4/5 (80%) | 29/30 (97%) |
| Project | 35/50 (70%) | 35/50 (70%) | 70/100 (70%) |
| Test 3 | 18/20 (90%) | 7/10 (70%) | 25/30 (83%) |
| AVERAGE (of %) | 85% | 70% | 81% |

Quarter Grade = 78% is made up of the average of the competency scores

* the assignment score appears in PowerSchool, but does not factor into the overall grade.

# Sample Calculation #2

| | EVAL | | ANALYZE | | DEMO | | INQ | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Points** | **Pct** | **Points** | **Pct** | **Points** | **Pct** | **Points** | **Pct** |
| Summative 1 | 15 of 15 | 100% | | | | | | |
| Summative 2 | | | 20 of 20 | 100% | | | | |
| Summative 3 | | | | | 15 of 15 | 100% | 15 of 15 | 100% |
| Summative 4 | | | | | 20 of 20 | 100% | | |
| Summative 5 | | | | | 10 of 10 | 100% | | |
| Summative 6 | | | | | 8 of 10 | 80% | 3 of 5 | 60% |
| Summative 7 | 20 of 20 | 100% | 19 of 20 | 95% | 19 of 20 | 95% | 20 of 20 | 100% |
| Summative 8 | 10 of 10 | 100% | | | | | | |
| Summative 9 | 10 of 10 | 100% | 8 of 10 | 80% | 10 of 10 | 100% | | |
| Summative 10 | | | 20 of 20 | 100% | | | | |
| Summative 11 | 15 of 15 | 100% | | | | | | |
| Summative 12 | | | | | 26 of 26 | 100% | | |
| OVERALL **COMPETENCY** SCORES (Average of **Percentages**) | | 100% | | 93.75% | | 96.43% | | 86.67% |
| OVERALL COURSE GRADE TO DATE (Average of Competency Percentages) | 94.21% [(100%+93.75%+96.43%+86.67%)/4] | | | | | | | |

# Competency Grading FAQ's

- **Why do some competencies show as a letter grade and others as a number 1-4?**
  - The academic competencies that are used to calculate a student's final grade are presented as letter grades.
  - The Work Study Practice "competencies" are scored on a 4 point rubric and these do not factor into the student's final grade.
- **Why does a test weigh as much as a quiz?**
  - In a competency based system, the value of the assignment has no bearing on the student's ability to demonstrate proficiency in the assessed competency.
  - A student's grade should be based off of the demonstration of competency and not on their ability to be good at school. That is a behavior and that applies to the Work Study Practices.
- **If participation and completion grades don't "count" why will kids even do that work?**
  - By entering them into the formative category teachers are creating a record for parents to see if their child isn't completing work. They are also building a bank of data for the WSP.
- **Has it been decided what percentage is considered competent/proficient?**
  - Since we are still in a 100 point system, a student is proficient if they score a 65 or above.

# PowerSchool Tips

- **I can't see the details for each assignment when I view a class.**
  - This may be due to using the app which only shows a general overview. If you view grades on the computer, you will be able to get a more complete picture.
- **I see an assignment score but not an overall course score.**
  - This may be due to an entry error. If you are on the computer and see this, please contact your child's teacher.
- **I don't know how to access my child's PowerSchool?**
  - See the link below - https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tb66qCxForWDpdi5Ug1t9Imoc2eAjcn46jIY2kai1Bw/edit?usp=sharing
- **I don't really understand what I'm looking at?**
  - Start with your child's teacher. They will be able to clear up a lot of confusion. If they don't have the answer, reach out to your child's building administration.

# Additional Resources

[Looking at PowerSchool](#)

[March 4, 2020 presentation](#)