

A View from the Principal's Office

As we approach the fourth week of our school year I want to share some of the exciting conversations that are occurring at our school. Many of you will hear about proficiency-based learning / assessment and will wonder how this differs from the learning experiences that you had in your life. I am embedding a video that we have shared with our staff that supports, at a fundamental level, our understanding of this shift in educational practice.

Hartford High School, like all schools in Vermont and many in the country, is on a journey toward making the shift from traditional grading. This will impact the way our teachers instruct, our students learn, and the way(s) that we report on that learning. The concept of proficiency has a long history in other venues. Many employers have traditionally used feedback to support staff professional development. Imagine a job where you get a letter grade without any other information once every nine weeks and that is expected to suffice in helping you grow in your job. Good coaches/directors/advisers have used feedback to help students, athletes, musicians, actors and actresses improve in specific, targeted areas. The structures of school that ties a fixed, alpha-numeric grade to student performance has its roots in the industrial age, a time when standardization was seen as an important educational outcome. The world our students enter upon graduation expects them to be independent thinkers capable of collaborating, communicating, problem-solving, creating, being flexible and innovative; in other words, versed in the skills that our school refers to as the "transferable skills." The acquisition of knowledge in our world is only as important as our ability to use that information for some greater outcome. Our students will also need to be able to respond to constructive feedback as they use their content knowledge and the transferable skills to complete a project.

Hartford has approached this work cautiously and with an appreciation that all of us are learners in this endeavor; we do not want to place requirements on our students, their families, or our staff that we are not prepared to support. At the same time we feel a sense of genuine urgency borne from our understanding of our students' future needs and in partnership with each and every learners' current interests and levels of preparedness.

You will continue to be part of a community of learners who are exploring what it means to successfully transition from the thinking of the early twentieth century to the twenty-first century – along the way you will undoubtedly see school practices that are unfamiliar and that may cause you to pause. I encourage you, in those moments, to consider what I have shared in this post and, if you feel I can help, reach out to me or your child's teachers

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jV91CVs1mU>

Please join us on Thursday, Sept. 20 for our Open House from 6:00 - 7:45. Mr. Hamilton will be meeting from 5:00 - 6:00 with any parents of students taking Driver's Education.

Sincerely,

Nelson Fogg
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