

Frequently Asked Questions about MHS's Proficiency Initiative:

What is the purpose of the Proficiency Initiative?

The purpose of Proficiency is to help ensure that all MHS students benefit from high expectations and are given the necessary time and support to meet those expectations. Proficiency will change the way in which grades are derived and it will also change the way in which students are assessed.

What is the background / history of Proficiency at MHS?

In the 2003-2004 school year, MHS Principal Don Sierakowski approved a small pilot of the Proficiency model in the World Language department. This pilot was monitored by MHS administration, the Manchester Board of Education, and district administrators. The process of piloting and learning about Proficiency continued through the next two school years. The model is in its second full year of implementation, and proficiency writing is virtually complete. The goal now is to review and revise proficiencies as necessary to inform instruction and assure they are accurately assessing what the students know.

Are all MHS courses involved in the Proficiency Initiative?

All courses that are run using an MHS designed curriculum will have proficiencies. Only those courses with curricula from UCONN, MCC, or AP (the College Board) will not have proficiencies.

Where did this idea come from?

Proficiency is not a new idea. Examples of proficiency assessment are everywhere in our society. Doctors, lawyers, teachers, soldiers, secretaries, and even drivers all must pass assessments that judge whether they have met a determined level of skill or not. If they have not, they are expected to go back, re-study, and re-practice their material until they are ready to re-attempt the proficiency assessment. We will take this same approach to assessing the most important skills for each student's success.

How does grading work?

Not every quiz or test will be considered a Proficiency Task - only the 1-to-2 most important concepts in a marking period will be measured with a Proficiency Task. On these assessments, there is no such thing as a mediocre result. Students will be judged as Proficient, or Not Yet Proficient. If they are judged to be Not Yet Proficient, they should immediately seek extra support from their teacher to help ensure Proficiency. Students will have as many attempts at Proficiency as they would like within one quarter – without penalty. This means that, for Proficiency Tasks, students should give their best effort on their first attempt, but the score for Proficiency will be the same whether the student needs one attempt or many. In this way, we feel that Proficiency will be one important step to ensuring all students are given a chance to demonstrate high achievement in learning.

If a student does not reach Proficiency on the first attempt, it is very, very important that he or she seek help and guidance from the teacher immediately. Teachers are

available to help every day after school and by appointment.

For courses in the Proficiency model, 15% of the student's grade will be based on whether or not he or she has met the Proficiency Standards for that marking period. For example, if there were two Proficiency Tasks in a marking period and the student demonstrated proficiency on both of them – they would receive full credit for the proficiency portion of their grade. This would comprise 15% of the overall grade. If only 1 of the 2 proficiencies were demonstrated, that portion of their grade would only receive half of the credit.

These new methods and higher expectations for all children are our school's moral, ethical, and legal responsibility to the community of Manchester. By holding high expectations for all students, regardless of background or history, and providing more support to those in need, we feel that each student will have the opportunity to learn at the highest level possible.