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My personal journey with Proficiency-Based Learning began in the spring of 2015 when I attended monthly trainings with the Great Schools Partnership. In five subsequent years, I've created and revised our 9th grade curriculum and supported the English Department's articulation of the skills that we want our students to acquire from grades 7-12. My comments reflect the departmental, PLC, and intervention structures inside RHS that allow us to teach authentically to this system. Our current standards-referenced system does clarify in every class, at every level of instruction what a student should learn, how they can learn it, what to do if they do not understand it (equity), and what to do if they have already mastered it (excellence).

Before my time at RHS, the staff created learning standards and proficiency scales that are revised on an annual basis. Content-area department chairs supported their individual course-level Professional Learning Communities (PLC) groups who spent a great deal of time developing grading scales. These are crucial in communicating to students and families what skills will be assessed in the course and what a student should know to be considered proficient (3) in that skill. PLCs help ensure that multiple sections of the same course operate smoothly so courses with two different teachers will teach the same skills regardless instructor. The PLC structure is supported by late-start on Wednesdays, and many teachers are in multiple PLCs if they teach different courses.

This year, as a result of the NEASC accreditation process, all departments and PLCs are further articulating their curriculum through a review and refinement of Scope and Sequence documents that will, like our standards and scales, eventually be available to the public on the RHS website. The Scope and Sequence documents are the "missing link" between our standards/scales and our common summative assessments that were created over the past few years, and in terms of the English Department, almost every grade-level PLC was recently able to articulate year-long and semester courses easily during one morning in-service. My department's progress is an indication that our teachers not only intimately know what they teach, but also do so as efficient, competent, professional teams with regular revision, updating, and piloting of new content.

Finally, the most granular piece of the standards-referenced grading puzzle is the formation of common summative assessments. These assessments again are created in PLCs and the Scope and Sequence documents help illustrate the major assessments for each unit of study and tie them into the Overarching and Prioritized Standards. Teachers use available common planning time as well as the late-start Wednesdays to compare student data, consider intervention strategies, and update, plan, and refine assessments. Some teacher teams do this to an exceptional degree, while others find it harder to find common ground, but the benefit of the system is that teachers maintain a great deal of freedom in *how* they teach the content and standards so long as they remain within the agreed upon "lanes" that guarantee all students have an opportunity to meet a standard and even exceed it.

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It is also crucial to point out that our entire Multi-Tiered System of Support for students not meeting proficiency on standards is constantly utilized by the staff. Our interventions include daily FLEX block, after-school grant-funded EPIC tutoring program, EST teams at each grade level, and credit recovery blocks during the day and at the end of the year. These provide every student opportunities to work with teachers to reach passing and proficient and efficiently fit into the school day. PLC groups may discuss individual students, groups of students, and curricular changes that need to be made in order to serve all students at all levels. I frequently have found that my ability to serve over 100 high school freshmen in a year-long course was *entirely* contingent upon my fidelity to these interventions mixed with positive student relationships.

That said, no system is perfect. Our 8+ years of standards-referenced system building and refinement continue and our next battle appears to be at the core of why we meet today. The question seems to be, is this system better than our old one or not? There are real concerns about the 1-4 grading scale and the ability of students to be able to reach a 4. We have a standards-referenced system, meaning that ultimately the scores for individual standards are combined into a composite score for the course, and then again to give a single score for each of the Vermont Transferable Skills. There is frustration with the decaying average used in our gradebook, and there is still work to be done to continually train and educate every instructor and PLC group in the importance of alignment and the weighting of grades.

Progress for Rutland High School includes tackling these numbers issues and making sure all members of the staff feel confident that the grade a student receives adequately and accurately reflects their learning. There is a fear of subjectivity related to grading which, when students are being compared to a standard as opposed to each other should be minimized, but in practice is more complex. My sense is that we are continually engaging in the refinement of the system and seriously caution against removing it and expecting better outcomes.

In my professional opinion, students at Rutland High School are more likely to know the skills they are learning and be given an opportunity to learn those skills at a variety of levels in our current system. Teachers know what they are expected to teach, our SBAC scores consistently are at or exceed the state average despite demographic and economic challenges in our city. Is our system perfect? No, especially when you consider that the original Latin meaning of the word *perfect* is “completed, finished.” This process is one that will never be over, but we seek excellence, support our teachers and staff to reach it, and are always making progress. Rutland High School is in many ways a role-model and resource for other institutions in Vermont. I hope that this inquiring body supports teachers and school systems to do this important work and continues to build our state’s capacity to offer education of the highest quality.