South Portland School Department
Proficiency-based Learning Newsletter
Fall 2016

About the Proficiency-based Learning Steering Committee
The SPSD Board of Education formed the PbL Steering Committee in 2013 to ensure that all stakeholders would have the opportunity to provide input about the implementation of a proficiency based educational system in South Portland. The committee is comprised of representatives from all stakeholder groups: students, parents, elementary, middle high school teachers, elementary, middle high administrators, high school guidance, central office administration, and Board of Education. The committee serves as a sounding board and means for collecting broad and diverse feedback around the implementation of proficiency-based learning.

2016-17 HS Implementation FAQs

So who will be in PbL in the 2016-17 school year?
Ninth grade (Class of 2020) and tenth grade (Class of 2019) students will be taught and scored in a proficiency-based learning system in the 2016-17 school year. However, to ensure that students who are on track to take more advanced courses that are part of a 4-year progression (such as world language, music, art, etc.) some ninth and tenth grade students may be placed in a class with juniors (Class of 2018) and seniors (Class of 2017). Classes that contain juniors and seniors will be assessed in the traditional 100 scale grading system. At the end of the school year, there will be a conversion of the 100 scale year-end grades to a 4 pt scale.

What happens to students who are in both systems? What will appear on their transcript?
During the school year, students in ninth grade (Class of 2020) and tenth grade (Class of 2019) will receive progress reports from the electronic gradebook JumpRope. For those few students who are in a traditionally graded class (the 100 scale grading system), they will receive progress reports from Infinite Campus for those courses in addition to their JumpRope progress report. At the end of the year, when all grades are posted to the transcript, the 100 scale grades will be converted to 4 pt scale.

Eleventh grade (Class of 2018) and twelfth grade (Class of 2017) students’ grades will continue to be posted to their transcripts in the 100 scale.

Will there be an Honor Roll?
SPHS Scholars will replace the traditional Honor Rolls and will be determined at the end of each semester.

Will there be academic recognition at Graduation?
Graduates in the class of 2017 will be honored as they have been in past year. There will be an announcement of the Top Scholars as well as honor cords for students graduating with honors.

Key Terms Associated with PbL

Essential Learning Targets (ELTs) are the purposefully sequenced statements that describe what students will be expected to learn each school year. That is, ELTs are the skills, knowledge and understandings that students need, per grade level, to ensure that they are progressing toward meeting the more comprehensive Graduation Standards.

Content ELTs are specific concepts and skills that students receive instruction on and are provided opportunities to exhibit their proficiency toward.

The term 21st Century Skills ELTs refers to a targets written for a broad set of skills that are believed—by educators, school reformers, college professors, employers, and others—to be critically important to success in today’s world, particularly in collegiate programs and contemporary careers and workplaces. Generally speaking, 21st century skills can be applied in all academic subject areas, and in all educational, career, and civic settings throughout a student’s life.

Habits of Work ELTs are the skills and behaviors that are important for all students to have and exhibit to maximize their learning. Students are measured on the following: Preparation for Learning, Interactions with Peers, and Engagement for Learning. Teachers work with students to understand what each of these “look like” in the building and in their classroom.

In education, the term assessment refers to the wide variety of activities and tasks that educators use to evaluate, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, and skill acquisition of students.
Graduates in the class of 2018 will be honored based on a combination of traditional weighted scores from grades 9-11 as well as proficiency scores from grade 12.

Beginning with the class of 2019, SPHS graduates will be recognized according to a Latin Honors system.

- **Cum Laude** – 3.00 + at least 4 advanced courses
- **Magna Cum Laude** – 3.30 + at least 8 advanced courses w/ min. 3 being AP/College
- **Summa Cum Laude** – 3.50 + at least 12 advanced courses w/ min. 5 being AP/College

Who will still need credits to graduate?
All students in the classes of 2017, 2018, and 2019 need to accrue 24 credits in order to earn a diploma.

Is my diploma/my child’s diploma based on proficiency or credit?
Beginning with the class of 2020, diplomas will issued based on proficiency of Graduation Standards.

**SUMMARY OF IMPACT ON STUDENT COHORT GROUPS**

- **Class of 2017**
  - Traditional scores reported on transcript
  - Credit earned by receiving a 70 or better in courses
  - Graduation based on 24 credits
  - Weighted GPA determines Honors and Recognition

- **Class of 2018**
  - Traditional scores reported on transcript for grades 9, 10, and 11
  - Proficiency scores reported on transcript for grade 12
  - Credit earned by receiving a 70 grades 9 – 11 and a 2.3 in grade 12
  - Graduation based on 24 credits

- **Class of 2019**
  - Proficiency scores reported on transcript
  - Conversion of traditional scores at the completion of grades 9 and 10
  - Credit earned by receiving a 70 or a 2.3
  - Graduation based on 24 credits

- **Class of 2020**
  - Proficiency scores reported on transcript
  - Conversion of traditional scores at the completion of grade 9
  - Graduation based on evidence of proficiency

For additional information about proficiency-based learning visit the SPSDCurriculum.org website.

**Formative assessment** refers to a wide variety of methods that teachers use to conduct in-process evaluations of student comprehension, learning needs, and academic progress during a lesson, unit, or course. Formative assessment provides a way for teachers to share feedback to students on the key steps in the learning process to achieve proficiency of the learning target, and make adjustments to lessons, instructional techniques, and academic support.

**Summative assessments** are tasks or activities that students complete as a way to evaluate their learning progress and achievement at the conclusion of a specific instructional period—usually at the end of a project, unit, course, semester, program, or school year. Summative assessments provide evidence that students have gained proficiency of the full rigor of a learning target.

**Trending calculations** are a way of calculating a student’s score that is not an average of all scores but rather considers the more recent learning as a greater indicator of what the student is able to do at this moment. The **Power Law** is a research-based trending calculation that is powerful when answering the question "based on the evidence, what is the student's proficiency at this moment?" The math behind the power law formula is quite complex, but the key thing is that the power law formula predicts what the student’s next score will be based on summative assessment scores already present.

South Portland School Department uses an electronic gradebook called JumpRope to track and report student’s proficiency. To learn more about the tool visit the JumpRope page on the SPSD Curriculum website or visit www.jumpro.pe