



If I've heard it once, I've heard it a thousand times: This sure doesn't seem like the school I went to when I was a teenager.

Often, it's a parent of a first time high schooler making such a statement. They're right...because it's been 20 or so years since they were in these hallways. Occasionally, it's a businessman whose children long-ago graduated, and they simply have lost connection with the long, slow changes that have been taking place in the secondary school landscape over the last decade or two.

Schools face all kinds of pressure to perform now-a-days. Pressure comes from parents, students, business and industry, and higher education...and pressure from politicians and state departments of education. Some schools have been more active than others in preparing themselves with the ability to adapt to constant change. We recognize the need to shift our thinking at WPHS to such a culture- one that embraces constant change. In reality, that's the world our kids live in. Our teachers have literally put in thousands of hours of professional development time learning how to make the adjustments necessary for success.

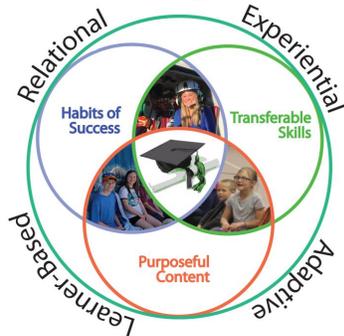
One thing is certain. The pressure we react to most keenly is the pressure to get our kids ready for their future.... Not our past. Success in the 21st Century looks much different than it did in the 20th century. There is little argument with that simple, driving fact.

As schools begin to change the instructional and assessment practices required to accommodate new standards for learning, teachers are required to make what they often consider a major transition in the way they teach. This is fundamental to a 21st Century school because students learn differently. And - what they need to be successful in life is different than what was required just a decade or two ago. Consider the list of emerging job titles in the linked article below:

<https://business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions/blog/future-of-recruiting/2018/12-jobs-you-will-be-recruiting-for-in-2030>

At Woodland Park High School, you've no doubt become aware of a major change in philosophy regarding what students are being held accountable for academically. In 2018-2019 we spent the year fertilizing and plowing the ground necessary to begin planting the seeds of Standards-Based Learning and Grading. This year, we begin implementation by carefully nurturing the emerging concepts of holding students accountable for what they should KNOW and what they should be ABLE TO DO before they graduate.

Real Learning. Real Life.



Setting standards for learning in each core class is where we begin this year. Clearly defining and articulating the proficiencies that students must demonstrate before a grade is issued is our foundation. We will be **scoring** and **grading** students based on rubrics designed to illustrate demonstration of proficiency that are fair, consistent and reliable. Scores will communicate progress toward the end goal of completing all of the standards required to pass the course.

We have six core commitments to this overall philosophy:

- **There are specific elements of *content knowledge* and *transferable skills* that all students should know and be able to do as a result of attending school.**
- **Grades represent learning (not behaviors) and should be valid, fair, consistent, and clearly reflect *what students know and are able to do*.**
- **Transferable skills are more important than content knowledge.**
- **Learning is dynamic, messy and non-sequential. Students may need more than one opportunity to prove proficiency. Retakes on tests and redoing projects are essential.**
- **Learning involves struggle and frustration; students should be doing the “heavy lifting” of learning.**
- **Habits of Success are modeled, taught, developed, and nurtured.**

As standards-based learning begins to happen at WPHS, the content taught won't change very much. Even the teaching strategies that teachers use will remain similar. However, how teachers and students THINK about the WAY they teach/learn will change profoundly, and the way we communicate about learning will change.

A few changes you will see:

- 1) We won't issue a letter grade until the end of a semester. We will however begin to communicate in SCORES that students receive along the way to a grade.
- 2) Currently in CORE classes (and next year in elective classes) students will be scored by a clearly defined rubric using a 1-2-3 or 4 score. Four is the best score a student can earn on an individual Demonstration of Learning (think assignment or assessment here).

- 3) If students are not satisfied with their performance, they may demonstrate their learning at a future date. This means students continue learning.
- 4) Once students demonstrate proficiency on a particular standard...they're free to move on. But, conversely, without a proficient demonstration of learning - passing a standard (and/or a course) will be impossible. And, therefore, passing a course will be equally impossible.

We know this will take time for all of our stakeholders to become comfortable with. Because, it's different, certainly different than the system we've used the last hundred years. But, even in its infancy, we're seeing clear understanding on the part of our kids and our teachers. They get it. And as they become more and more comfortable with it...their ability to make parents and community comfortable with it will happen as a matter of course. Just this morning, I heard a teacher say: "Once you really see this in action, you ask yourself: 'Why haven't we been doing this forever?'"

We expect questions. And we're ready with explanations. All we require for a healthy dialogue is an understanding that **we are committed** to clearly articulating what students are expected to know and be able to do and grade them on those standards. We are 100% - all in. This is the way schools should operate, and we're committed to the changes necessary to set Woodland Park students up for success. Come see us. Come talk with us. Come learn with us. And come join us in helping our students (our children) to be successful in their futures.

To help parents with this transition, there will be several opportunities to learn more in person. Please join us at one of the following:

Coffee with Kevin - Third Thursday of each month. 7:30AM-9:00AM (HS Library)  
SBG - Community Tutorials - October 7th (Monday at 6:30PM -HS Library)  
November 13th (Wednesday at 6:30PM - HS Library)

Hope to see you soon!

Kevin Burr,  
Principal