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Grading in physical education has been identified as a strong method to hold students accountable for learning tasks (Lund & Shanklin, 2011). Learning tasks are activities that are directly related to the lesson content (Rink, 2014). In addition, a grade provides students, parents and administrators with an indicator of what a student knows and is able to do at a particular point and time, and serves as a measure of student learning.

Traditionally, grades have been reported as a letter grade such as a “B” or a number grade such as an 85; however, reporting grades in this manner does not provide students and parents with information regarding what specifically went into determining the grade. Often factors that are not directly related to learning, such as dressing out, effort and participation are included in the calculation of a final grade (Baghurst, 2014; Young, 2011). This practice is problematic because while these aspects are necessary for student learning to take place in physical education, they are not related to the knowledge and skills, designated by the learning standards, that students should learn in physical education. Additionally, using these criteria as part of the computation of a grade further complicates the grading process because the student may have received the grade for putting forth effort, dressing out and participation, rather than for having a solid grasp of the physical education content that was taught during a grading period.

In light of the issues with traditional grading practices in physical education, is it time for the profession to work toward a generally accepted way to grade students that communicates student learning of physical education content? Standards-based grading may be one way for the profession to move toward an accepted mode of grading students in physical education, which would demonstrate what students know and are able to do, as well as provide quality information to students, parents and teachers (Brookhart et al., 2016).

O’Connor (2002) provided eight guidelines for standards-based grading:

1. Grading procedures should be linked to learning goals (i.e., standards and/or objectives). This guideline requires that grading procedures are aligned with stated learning goals and that the contribution of each goal is linked, in some manner, to the final grade.

2. Second, it is necessary to use performance outcomes that align with the standards to serve as reference points for grade determination. SHAPE America’s National Standards for K–12 Physical Education (SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators, 2014) provide these performance outcomes and help physical education teachers make decisions regarding how good is good enough when making a judgment about student learning.

3. Third, teachers should sample student performance and not include all scores in the final grade. This guideline indicates that teachers need to use a variety of assessment strategies that are both formative and summative in nature. Formative assessments provide feedback to students regarding their progress and areas that need more work or practice, and summative assessments occur at the end of a unit or phase of instruction and assess what students have learned (Rovegno & Bandhauer, 2013). Fourth, it is important to provide students with information about the assessments and how they will be used in the grading process. This practice provides precise learning expectations and ensures that students’ grades come from these assessments.

Based on these four guidelines, I would like to propose five steps that will help physical education teachers to use standards-based grading:

1. Decide which physical education standards will be addressed in a grading period.

2. Identify performance outcomes that align with each of the standards for each unit of instruction that will be taught during the grading period.

3. Create assessments to assess the performance outcomes that are aligned to each standard. These assessments...
could have specific criteria that indicate whether students are approaching, meeting or exceeding the performance outcomes. As an example, the scoring of criteria in these assessments could award one point if students are approaching the performance outcome, two points if they meet the performance outcome, and three points if they exceed the performance outcome.

4. Teach and assess each of the units of instruction in the grading period.

5. Compute the grade for the grading period based on the previously discussed three-point scale, which is tied to the assessment of whether students are approaching, meeting or exceeding the performance outcomes that are linked to the standards in each unit of instruction.

Table 1 provides an example of eighth-grade performance outcomes for lacrosse, hockey and outdoor pursuits that are aligned with learning standards.
example there are nine performance outcomes aligned with three National Standards that are being assessed in a grading period, which would result in a possibility of 27 points based on the assessment of each of those performance outcomes. Thus, if a student scored 23 points out of 27, their grade would be an 85. Unfortunately, as discussed earlier, reporting the grade as a number does not provide students and parents with much information regarding what students know and can do. However, if grades were reported in the format provided in Figure 1, students and parents would have a much better idea of what a student knows and can do in relation to the physical education learning standards, as well as how the student’s grade was calculated.

### References
