

The 5 Ps of Starting and Sustaining Grading Reform

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ABSTRACT

In the world of grading reform, questions such as “How do we get started with grading reform?” and “Our teachers completed a book study—what’s the next step?” are at the forefront of school leaders’ minds. Engaging conference keynote addresses and multi-day seminars can help K-12 educators understand the need to improve grading practices; however, school leaders may need practical steps to start or sustain grading reform. These practical steps should be based upon current research in the field and supported through a cohesive set of actions. This article presents a 5-P Framework for starting and sustaining grading reform.

Keywords: grading reform, standards-based grading, educational leadership, implementation framework, change management

A strong body of research suggests that schools should consider grading practices that are more consistent (Brookhart & Guskey, 2019), more equitable (Brookhart & Chism, 2025; Griffin & Townsley, 2022), and that better communicate learning (Brookhart et al., 2016). Grading experts recommend that schools transition away from points, percentages, and the mixing of achievement and non-achievement factors (Guskey, 2020a; Link & Guskey, 2022; Townsley, 2022). However, school leaders’ existing knowledge, mindsets, and experiences may constrain their readiness to initiate or sustain meaningful grading reform (Buckmiller et al., 2020; Kunnath et al., 2026; Morris et al., 2025). As a result, a “knowing–doing gap” (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000) can emerge, in which leaders understand the need for change but struggle to translate that knowledge into action. Furthermore, research in the field suggests that initiating grading reform or expanding effective grading practices presents challenges that school leaders may not be adequately prepared to address (Peters & Buckmiller, 2014; Townsley et al., 2019).

For example, one of the authors of this article received a phone call from a Kansas high school administrator whose building leadership team was energized to begin implementing more effective grading practices. Classroom teachers on the building leadership team had attended multiple conferences focused on grading and had recently participated in a grading-focused book study; however, the administrator was unsure of the steps to initiate effective grading practices at their school. During the next 18 months, this author, the high school administrator, and the building leadership team enacted a 5-P framework to not only initiate grading reform but also build capacity within the system to sustain these important changes beyond initial implementation. Utilizing this step-by-step framework, classroom teachers who were members of the building leadership team served as a guiding coalition to unify their understanding of effective grading practices, establish agreed-upon grading policies, and strategically implement these policies in their classrooms. Through their enhanced learning, feedback loops, and firsthand experiences, the building leadership team later felt confident enough to support their colleagues in implementing these grading policies. Today, this high school in Kansas continues to implement standards-based grading practices despite administrative turnover and serves as an example of the importance of what Townsley and colleagues (2019) recommend: “go slow to go fast” (p. 291).

In this article, we present a pragmatic approach to starting and sustaining grading reform with a 5-P Framework consisting of people, purpose, policies, pace, and persistence. Our framework begins with the right people, and then these people develop a deep understanding of *why* change is needed, followed by a multi-step process for getting started and sustaining grading reform. The 5 Ps are previewed in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

A Five P Framework for Starting and Sustaining Grading Reform

<u>P</u>eople	Assembling the right people to lead and facilitate grading reform.
<u>P</u>urpose	Establishing the <i>why</i> and <i>what</i> of grading reform by co-creating a grading purpose statement.
<u>P</u>olicies	Communicating the <i>how</i> of grading reform through identifying a list of 3-5 grading policies in support of the grading purpose statement.
<u>P</u>ace	Intentionally honoring the complexity of grading reform by implementing the grading policies over time.
<u>P</u>ersistence	Providing sustained support to implementation by utilizing feedback loops aligned with the established grading policies.

PEOPLE

The first P of the framework is getting the *right people* in place to spearhead the work. Instead of starting with grading policies or even a vision, we start here because it's the people who lead and perform the work, not the policies or purpose statement. Jim Collins (2001), author of the highly influential business management book *Good to Great*, explored what separates consistently great companies from those that are merely good, devoting his third chapter to finding the right people. He found that “executives who ignited the transformations from good to great did not first figure out where to drive the bus and then get people to take it there.” Collins clarified that rather than starting with purpose and vision, these leaders “*first* got the right people on the bus (and the wrong people off the bus) and *then* figured out where to drive it” (p. 41). Similarly, we suggest that a school leader's first step in grading reform is to identify the right people to lead the change they hope to enact in their school.

Without a team of the right people, the effectiveness and longevity of grading reform are limited to the time, effort, and tenure of the person pushing the initiative, typically a site or district-level administrator. Furthermore, effective leadership in grading reform requires a complex combination of vision, passion, experience, expertise, credibility, and trust. And while a single person is highly unlikely to possess these qualities, a thoughtfully selected team can do so collectively. Both John Kotter, Harvard Business School professor emeritus and author of *Leading Change* (2012), and James Spillane, Northwestern professor and author of *Distributed Leadership* (2006), dispel the myth of the “heroic leader” as the primary driver of organizational change in their influential leadership texts. Spillane (2006) replaces it with the concept of distributed leadership from a “leader-plus” perspective, which encompasses multiple individuals across a school site, including administrators, department chairs, instructional coaches, teacher-leaders, counselors, and other respected faculty members. Collectively, these people become the faces and voices of the reform movement.

But assembling such a group requires intentionality, coordination, and structure. Kotter (2012) first coined the term “guiding coalition,” calling on a group of individuals within organizations with credibility, expertise, leadership skills, and positional power to drive reform efforts. Such a group, according to Kotter, shares a common commitment, builds trust, communicates effectively, and models the change it desires. These ideas have been championed and applied to schools and, in particular, to professional learning communities by Dufour et al. (2010) and, more recently, by Hall (2021). And although the group has no “heroic leader,” it does require an “initiator,” usually an administrator with positional power and the urgency to act, to select and convene the group in the first place (Guskey, 2020b).

For this reason, we suggest forming a leadership group directly responsible for grading reform. Thus, a *grading guiding coalition* is needed to move grading reform forward when the scope of the work is large—whether it's a cohort of early adopters, a school site, or an entire district. The coalition ideally includes a strategic mix of stakeholders directly involved

in the grading process, including teachers, instructional coaches, support staff, counselors, and administrators. Such a composition ensures a diversity of credibility and perspective, and with at least one administrator on board, the group has the authority to take real action. Although some members have no positional authority, they lead by example and, in doing so, show other staff members that grading reform is possible at their school site and with their students. Guskey (2020b) also recommends including parents and students—either as direct members or by capturing their voices and perspectives through surveys or focus groups. While the group likely has many differences, they should share at least one thing in common: they find the topic of grading reform to be compelling.

The total size of the coalition can vary greatly, but Kotter (2012) provides helpful guidance, noting that “change often starts with just two or three people,” but grows from “half a dozen” to “twenty to fifty,” depending on the size of the organization (p. 61). Once convened, the group should establish a common knowledge base on the problems with traditional grading and methods of grading reform. See Appendix A for a list of recommended books and articles to serve this purpose. Next, the work of the grading guiding coalition truly begins with the framework's second P.

PURPOSE

With the right people in place, the leadership team can move to the second P: *purpose*. In this framework, purpose includes two dimensions: *the why* and *the what*, as summarized in Figure 2. Collectively, they constitute a vision for the work—something Kotter (2012) describes as essential for change. *The why* dimension represents the values and beliefs that give the work meaning and urgency. It is the pathos of purpose. Rather than diving in by determining the particulars—the percentage of weights assigned to formative and summative assessment in the grade book or whether the school should permit retakes—a strategic start begins with a broad-based purpose: *the why*. When the guiding coalition begins by establishing their *why* for grading reform, they determine shared understandings and values that provide the determination and drive to take on the inevitable challenges and unknowns that arise when addressing *the how* of grading reform. This collective urgency helps drive future action and is part of the team's essential trust-building process (Kotter, 2012). Simon Sinek (2009), in his book *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*, points out that it's *the why* that ultimately motivates people to act. For these reasons, we recommend beginning with *the why* of purpose before proceeding to *the what*.

Establishing a common *why* for grading reform requires both reflection and discussion. Here are two guiding questions to facilitate the process:

1. *How are grades important in our students' current and future lives?*
2. *What are the possible implications of ineffective grading practices?*

Once the team has had time to reflect and discuss, they can identify common ideas to drive their work. Below is an example of a *why statement* that incorporates values and beliefs about integrity, decision-making, and equity that may emerge from the questions above:

The Central High Grading Guiding Coalition asserts that effective grading practices are essential for creating meaningful report card grades that support valid decision-making regarding student opportunities and areas for growth and development. We further recognize that we must make a deliberate effort to ensure that such practices and grades are applied consistently across all student groups at our school.

Such a statement may appear at the top of coalition agendas and serves as a continual reminder about the overarching meaning that drives their work.

Furthermore, the “why level” purpose must be established at two levels—the guiding coalition level and, eventually, the broader site level. Because if a school is to successfully implement grading reform at scale, a majority of teachers must buy into *the why*. And involving them in creating a common *why* can be much more effective than simply providing it to them (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Harris et al., 2022; Spillane, 2006). So we suggest repeating the process outlined above, but this time including the entire staff.

Figure 2***Two Dimensions of Grading Purpose***

Dimension	Meaning	Function
The <i>Why</i>	moral and educational impetus for grading reform	Provide inspiration and drive the work: the pathos of purpose
The <i>What</i>	function and meaning of report card grades	Focus grading practices, reporting methods, and decision-making: the logos of purpose

The corollary to *the why is the what* dimension. Here, educators establish a clear, common understanding of the purpose that report card grades are intended to serve and the meaning they are intended to convey. By doing so, teachers can ensure they use grading and reporting practices as intentional means that achieve these established ends. Especially important is the *common* element of *the what* dimension, so that all students' grades have the same meaning and function. When this is established and communicated across a school site, it can increase integrity in the grading process, as well as clarity and trust among students and parents (Guskey et al., 2024). It is important to note that, on the whole, this has not been true in American schools for more than 100 years (Brookhart, 2026; Brookhart et al., 2016).

A great deal of work has already been done on this dimension of the grading purpose—particularly by grading experts Susan Brookhart (2009, 2011, 2017) and Thomas Guskey (2015, 2020b, 2024). While their ideas vary in nuance, they are parallel in their emphasis that the main purpose of teacher grading should be to communicate student academic achievement, and the primary audience should be students and parents. We echo these recommendations as both researchers and practitioners. And as a part of the grading guiding coalition's common knowledge-building process, it is important that the group establish an internal *what* of purpose that closely aligns with these expert recommendations. This ensures that the leadership group has a “true north” for the grading reform movement that is supported by leading experts in the field (Schimmer, 2016).

But like the *why dimension*, providing expert recommendations is not a substitute for leading the staff in a collaborative process of discussing and establishing their own *what* for grading purpose. Rather, such recommendations can serve as guidance and even “guardrails,” but the teachers themselves should have the final say. When starting the work, the grading guiding coalition may choose to front-load expert recommendations alongside the common *why* the staff previously created. From here, a focused staff discussion can help to organize ideas and identify commonalities. Below are three discussion questions that can help the staff identify *the what* of grading purpose:

1. *What purpose do we intend our report card grades to be used for?*
2. *What common meaning do we assign to our report card grades?*
3. *Who are our report card grades primarily intended for?*

Although answers will usually vary, the coalition members guiding the work are looking for patterns in teacher responses that align with the ideas in both the expert guidance and the staff's *why statement*. Making decisions can be challenging, but the goal is consensus about what Brookhart (2011) calls an “‘I can live with that’ status” (p. 12). A final step in the creation process is packaging the most important common ideas that emerge from this collaborative process, which can help to guide grading reform throughout the next three Ps of the 5P framework. Figure 3 displays a template that schools can use to establish their common purpose statement.

Figure 3***Grading Purpose Statement Template***

The teachers of [team or site] intend for our report card grades to be primarily used to [state or list purpose]. The report card grades we assign are meant to represent [state meaning of grades]. The primary audience for these grades are [state audience].

POLICIES

The third P in the framework is to create a list of three to five grading policies describing the “how” of grading reform. Following *purpose*, Guskey (2020b) suggests educators are now ready to make decisions about the best way to implement grading reform. Depending upon the size of the guiding coalition, the policy work may be accomplished by a smaller group within the guiding coalition or as a whole. Regardless of the size of the team leading this work, the list of three to five policies supports the grading purpose statement and establishes clarity around the “how” of grading reform. Oftentimes, a school or district captures these grading policies within a building handbook, such as a grading practices implementation guide or embedded within other district handbooks or guidelines. Common grading policies focus on five areas of implementation: formative vs summative evidence, number of performance levels, communicating non-achievement separately, reassessment, and extra credit.

Formative vs. Summative Evidence

Experts recommend that grades should be based solely upon summative evidence, rather than a mix of formative and summative evidence (Brookhart, 2017; Heritage, 2022). Historically, grades have been based upon point accumulation regardless of purpose (Townsend, 2022). In contrast, assessment literacy principles indicate that the purpose of formative assessment is to provide students with a clear understanding of where they are at *during* the learning process (Heritage, 2022). Because instruction is ongoing and learning continues after formative assessment activities, it does not make sense to include evidence from formative assessment when determining a student’s grade. Similarly, homework and other in-class assignments or activities become feedback and formative in nature, and therefore shouldn’t contribute to a student’s grade (Townsend, 2022; Vatterott, 2015). Grading policies should emphasize that evidence from summative assessments such as end-of-unit tests, projects, and essays should determine academic grades (Guskey et al., 2024; Townsend, 2022). As a corollary, all other non-summative assignments and assessments will be feedback-only. A sample grading policy is “Summative assessments will be used to determine the current level of learning for each student.”

Number of Performance Levels

The results from common standardized assessments, such as state assessments, communicate student learning using a small number of defined performance levels, such as *Standard Not Met*, *Standard Nearly Met*, *Standard Met*, and *Standard Exceeded*. Although we do not recommend the specific naming conventions for these performance levels (more on this below), classroom teachers should report learning using a finite number of performance levels (Guskey, 2024; Townsend & Wilcox, 2024). Within traditional grading systems, learning is often communicated through points that are converted to percentages. Through what Guskey (2024) refers to as the “illusion of data validity,” a percentage-based, 0-100 system is commonly believed to be more precise, given it has 101 performance levels. That is, a student with a 95% on a test may believe they have a higher level understanding than a classmate with a 94% on the same test; however, Guskey (2024) warns that inter-rater reliability and other interpretation errors can make directly measuring student learning down to a percentage point a nearly impossible endeavor. Instead, grading reform authors and educational measurement experts agree that educators report learning using a finite number of performance levels to improve accuracy (Brookhart, 2013; Guskey, 2024; Townsend & Wilcox, 2024). Grading policies should require that learning will be communicated on a report card or within an electronic grade book using a finite number of performance levels—Guskey (2024) recommends four to seven. Sample classroom performance levels may include *Beginning*, *Developing*, *Nearly Meets*, *Meets Standard*¹. When naming the top level, Schimmer (2016) and Guskey (2014) warn educators that using labels such as *Exceeds Standard* can present implementation difficulties. Their rationale is that when students are required to exceed the standard to reach the top performance level, teacher expectations can be difficult to clarify and defend. A sample grading policy is “The grade book will reflect student learning based upon state standards using four agreed-upon performance levels.”

¹ When needed for the purpose of determining course letter grades, each performance level can also have a number connected to it (e.g., 1-*Beginning*, 2-*Developing*, etc.). For a detailed explanation of options for determining letter grades from these levels and corresponding numbers, for example in a high school setting, see Townsend and Wear (2020) or O'Connor (2022).

Communicate Non-achievement Separately

Evidence from over a century of grading research suggests that factors contributing to classroom grades have included a combination of achievement and behavior factors (Brookhart et al., 2016). When behaviors such as participation, responsibility, and attendance are combined with academic achievement, the result is an overall omnibus grade that does not serve a clear purpose. Instead, experts recommend communicating non-achievement separately from achievement (Link & Guskey, 2022; Schimmer, 2023; Wilcox & Townsley, 2022). At the elementary or middle school level, communicating non-achievement separately may look like a “work habits” or “employability skills” section on the report card that includes a small number of habits or skills. At the high school level, communicating non-achievement factors separately may involve ongoing communication using district-provided tools such as Parent Square or an “employability” section within the electronic gradebook. Regardless of the method used to separately communicate these non-achievement behavior factors, educators should seek to ensure these factors are explicitly taught and formatively assessed prior to summative reporting (Schimmer, 2023). A sample grading policy that a guiding coalition may consider related to communicating non-achievement separately is as follows: “Non-achievement factors will be explicitly taught, assessed, and communicated separately from academic achievement.”

Reassessment

Educators should provide intentional opportunities for students to reassess their learning (Townsley & Wilcox, 2024). Providing intentional reassessment opportunities was a prominent change during COVID-era emergency remote learning (Townsley & Kunnath, 2022) and appears to be continuing in the years following the pandemic (Kunnath et al., 2026). Although Link and Guskey (2022) suggest that reassessment is not a critical component of effective grading practices, other experts have argued that reassessment is a cornerstone of grading reform (Townsley & Wilcox, 2024). Providing students with opportunities to reassess their learning requires a philosophical and a technical shift in practice. Philosophically, reassessment asks teachers to embrace a learning-centered mindset, recognizing that students learn at different rates and that initial attempts likely involve errors and misconceptions.

However, providing students multiple opportunities over time to demonstrate their learning must be thoughtfully structured so that it does not become a “blind” reassessment, in which policy permits students to complete a second assessment, after performing poorly on the first, without first demonstrating any new learning (Townsley & Wear, 2020). Unlimited, unstructured retakes can unintentionally reduce student accountability and create unsustainable workloads for teachers. Intentional reassessment policies balance opportunity with responsibility by establishing clear expectations and protocols. Time limits or reassessment windows, for example, help ensure that reassessment remains meaningful for students while feasible for teachers. Grading reform authors contend that prerequisite corrective activities, such as error analysis, targeted practice, conferencing, or additional instruction, are equally important (Guskey, 2023; Townsley & Wear, 2020). These steps communicate that improvement comes from relearning rather than blind repetition. A sample grading policy related to reassessment is as follows: “Students will have multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning, with reassessment permitted only after completing an intentional relearning plan.”

Extra Credit

Teachers should eliminate the use of extra credit (O’Connor et al., 2018; Reeves, 2016). Too often, extra credit is awarded for “filler” tasks, such as completing holiday crossword puzzles, or for non-academic incentives like bringing supplies such as markers and tissues to school for classroom use. O’Connor and colleagues (2018) do not mince words regarding the use of extra credit when they prescribe, “Leaders must require the elimination of common practices that compromise the accuracy of grades. These include...extra credit that awards points for behaviors that are unrelated to the standards” (p. 69). Given this support for eliminating extra credit, a sample grading policy is “Extra credit will not be given at any time.”

All five sample grading policies, which focus on formative vs summative evidence, number of performance levels, non-achievement factors, reassessment, and extra credit, are shown in Figure 4 below. Because context matters and all grading policies should be developed in support of a grading purpose statement, we encourage guiding coalitions to consider Figure 4 as a reference, rather than a model to be utilized verbatim.

Figure 4

Sample Grading Policies

Central Junior High Grading Policies
1. Summative assessments will be used to determine the current level of learning for each student. 2. The grade book will reflect student learning based upon state standards, using four agreed-upon performance levels 3. Non-achievement factors will be explicitly taught, assessed, and communicated separately 4. Students will have multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning, with reassessment permitted only after completing an intentional relearning plan. 5. Extra credit will not be given at any time.

PACE

The fourth P is pace. A common temptation in grading reform is to go “all-in” by setting a firm start date and expecting every teacher to fully implement the grading policies at once. While this approach may appear decisive, change leadership research suggests it is rarely the most effective or sustainable path. For example, Everett Rogers’ (2003) diffusion of innovations theory emphasizes the importance of early adopters and gradual spread, while Kotter’s (2012) change framework highlights the value of building momentum through short-term wins. Together, these perspectives point to a more intentional and phased approach to implementation. Rather than mandating immediate, comprehensive changes to grading practices, school leaders can begin by identifying small, manageable entry points that allow educators to experiment, reflect, and refine their practice. One example is to incrementally adjust the balance between formative and summative assessment. A school might begin with a 70/30 summative-to-formative weighting and then increase the summative percentage by 10% each year toward an eventual 100% summative weight. This allows teachers, students, and families to adapt to the shift while keeping grading practices stable enough to maintain trust.

Additional strategies include initiating and expanding implementation at the grade level or by content teams. For example, the 6th-grade team may be ready to begin adopting the grading policies in year one, followed by the 7th-grade team in year two. Alternatively, the science team may implement the grading policies in the first semester and then support the math team as they implement the policies in the second semester of the same school year. Regardless of the pacing strategy, these early adopters should receive targeted support (see “Persistence” below), develop shared language and tools, and generate concrete examples of success. Their work creates credibility and practical models for other educators in the school while reducing long-term anxiety across the system. By pacing implementation thoughtfully, leaders honor the complexity of grading reform and increase the likelihood that changes will sustain rather than fade over time. Sustaining grading reform over time also includes supporting teachers throughout various implementation phases, which leads to the next P, persistence.

PERSISTENCE

Persistence is the final P in the framework, which we define as providing sustained support for educators over time. As reformed grading practices are piloted intentionally in classrooms, establishing meaningful feedback loops aligned with established grading policies becomes essential to ensure implementation proceeds intentionally rather than haphazardly. Early adopters within the pilot group often lead this work, but their success depends on sustained support rather than one-time training sessions. Previous research suggests that educators seeking to implement effective grading practices require multiple iterations of support over time (Townesley & Knight, 2020; Townesley & Sult, 2026).

Similarly, research on organizational change within schools consistently shows that meaningful instructional shifts take multiple years to fully take root and require coherent, ongoing support systems (Hall & Hord, 2020; McLure & Aldridge, 2023). This reality underscores the importance of designing implementation plans that include planned opportunities for feedback, reflection, and recalibration. Anecdotal evidence from cohort-based models at one of the author’s schools reinforces this conclusion. Within these grading reform cohorts, teachers have engaged in sustained collaborative learning, iterative practice, and action research, rather than rapid, top-down policy adoption. These feedback loops allowed small adjustments to compound into meaningful progress.

Intentional feedback loops should center on specific grading policies rather than the grading reform as a whole. For example, school leaders may choose to establish clear criteria for reassessment (e.g., a written policy that includes corrective activities completed within an agreed-upon timeline) and ask teachers to submit their reassessment policies to school leaders for feedback. Using the results of this feedback loop, teachers may be affirmed in their reassessment details, asked to revise and resubmit for additional feedback, or participate in follow-up reassessment professional learning. Another example of an intentional feedback loop could be multi-faceted. First, early implementing teachers provide later implementing teachers with feedback on their standards-based grade books one month following whole-staff professional learning on setting up their electronic grade books. Using the results of this feedback loop, teachers revise their grade books. Second, to ensure more consistent practices across the building or district, administrators provide feedback to all teachers two months following whole-staff professional learning on their grade books.

Probing implementation through intentional feedback loops signals that progress matters more than perfection and creates a culture of professional growth. When leaders listen closely, respond thoughtfully, and adjust support accordingly, teachers are more likely to persist through the complexities of grading reform, and progress is more likely to be sustained in the long term.

CONCLUSION

Impactful and enduring grading reform requires not only knowledge on the topic, but also deliberate planning and execution. The 5-P Framework, comprising *people*, *purpose*, *policies*, *pace*, and *persistence*, is a strategic reform method designed to help school leaders close the all-too-common knowing-doing gap to put grading theory into practice. Using the framework, the initiating leader begins by getting the right people in place to perform the work by organizing a grading guiding coalition. These people then establish a grading purpose by defining the *why* and *what* of grading, which guides the work of the coalition and individual teachers who implement it in their classrooms. Subsequently, the grading guiding coalition is ready to determine the *how* of reform by deciding on three to five grading policies, considering high-leverage topics such as formative vs summative evidence, number of performance levels, communicating non-achievement factors separately, reassessment, and eliminating extra credit. And while planning for the implementation of these policies, reformers are intentional and deliberate about their pacing, avoiding the common mistake of doing *too* much *too* soon. Finally, the coalition sets the stage for long-lasting reform by establishing feedback loops that will enable teachers and leaders to engage in an iterative process of implementation, feedback, reflection, and refinement. See Appendix A for a list of recommended readings to establish a common knowledge base on grading reform specific to the first three Ps. (Due to the contextual and granular nature of pace and persistence, this appendix does not include resources for these two Ps.)

Ultimately, the goal of grading reform is for such refined grading policies to become the new normal—part of the school's pedagogical culture. This means that reformed grading becomes institutionalized and, regardless of leadership or faculty changes, becomes part of the organizational professional practice. The 5-P framework was a key to implementing successful grading reform for the Kansas high school mentioned at the beginning of this article, and it's our recommendation for other school sites and systems engaging in similar work.

Thus, our answer to “How do we get started with grading reform?” and “Our teachers completed a book study—what's the next step?”: Start with the right *people*, establish a *purpose*, determine key *policies*, be mindful of *pacing*, and integrate support to sustain *persistence*.

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APPENDIX

RECOMMENDED READING: ESTABLISHING A COMMON GRADING REFORM KNOWLEDGE BASE

Topic	Resource
People	- Guskey, T. R. (2020). <i>Get set, go! Creating successful grading and reporting systems</i>. Solution Tree. - Hall, B. (2021). <i>Powerful guiding coalitions: How to build and sustain the leadership team in your PLC at work</i>. Solution Tree Press. - Kotter, J.P. (2012). <i>Leading change</i>. Harvard Business Review Press.
Purpose	- Brookhart, S. M. (2011). Starting the conversation about grading. <i>Educational Leadership</i>, 69(3), 10–14. - Guskey, T. R. (2020). <i>Get set, go! Creating successful grading and reporting systems</i>. Solution Tree. - Sinek, S. (2009). <i>Start with why: How great leaders inspire everyone to take action</i>. Portfolio/Penguin.
Policies	Guskey, T. R., Frey, N., & Fisher, D. (2024). <i>Grading with integrity: A research-based approach grounded in honesty, transparency, accuracy,</i>

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