

## Meeting 16 • 25 February 2010

Version:  
2/25/10

## Today • my deadline page

numbers in ( ) = minutes planned for activity/ topic

√ = topic / activity that was adequately dealt with during the class

+ = topic needs more attention &amp; will be resumed at next / subsequent meeting(s)

- = a topic / activity that was proposed but not carried out (but will be taken up later)

~~Struck through text like this~~ = a topic / activity that was proposed but not included / is not going to be taken up after all*Italic text like this* = comments after the meeting

	Main topic(s): Rubrics; Teaching and Testing Writing
(5)	assessment in the news! The Oregonian article (25 February, A1) about proficiency-based instruction & testing in Oregon schools (brief mention - more discussion next Tuesday, after you've read it); <i>LaFolair &amp; Mall</i> ;
(60)	introduction to Oregon standards for everything (0023 chronology), for second languages (0698), for math (0695), and for writing (0698); if available: worksamples used in FLL 2002 assessment of 300-level writing proficiency (setup & scoring guide: 0313)
(30)	Assignment: create a scoring guide for a language activity, with reflection; more comments about the "BIMP"; photocopied work samples; I'm considering including this in a panel discussion that replaces the final exam (perhaps with invited guests from the FLL Assessment Committee)
(10)	a farewell lick and promise to teaching and assessing writing (Barnett, 0009); adjust outline for rest of course: possible topics include course assessment, curriculum assessment, program assessment, department assessment, technology-based assessment; <i>assessment - &amp; beyond / Then</i>

## Upcoming class meetings

01 &amp; 03 March.: more about the BIMP; testing reading &amp; listening (maybe); assessing textbooks &amp; other resources, courses, curricula, programs (including details of research)

## Upcoming assignment(s)

This section offers a PREVIEW, not activated assignments. Assignments are made, with announcement of their deadlines, both in class and on the "schedule" page.

Reading for upcoming topics: 0161 Liskin-Gasparro, "Practical Considerations in Receptive Skills Testing" (FLA 17.4 (1984): 369-73; 0162 James, "Are You Listening: the Practical Components of Listening Comprehension" (FLA 17.2 (1984): 0699 ACTFL "Blueprint for Action on Language Education (2005); Donato, et al, "Literary Discussions and Advanced Speaking Functions: Researching the (Dis)Connection" (FLA 37.2, 183-9; here 0104abs the abstract); ••more to come (Weber state dept assessment; WBF assessment of EWU; Schalock)

## Announcements

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## Misc.

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## FREE ONLINE Communication Assessment Service

[www.communicationmatrix.org](http://www.communicationmatrix.org)

is a free online version of the *Communication Matrix* (Rowland, 1996 and 2004). This assessment instrument is designed for individuals of all ages who function at the earliest stages of communication and who use any form of communication, including pre-symbolic and augmentative or alternative forms.

En Español:

[www.matrizdecomunicacion.org](http://www.matrizdecomunicacion.org)

- **It's easy to use**

Clear instructions make it easy to enter data. Previously completed assessments may be updated. Parents and professionals may complete the assessment independently and compare their impressions. No identifying information is retained.

- **It generates useful results**

- View/print a one-page graphic Profile
- View/print a list of specific Communicative Behaviors and Messages expressed
- Enter notes and comments
- Update a previous assessment
- View an animated display of progress
- Share results with parents or other professionals

- **It's free**

OREGON HEALTH & SCIENCE UNIVERSITY  The online assessment service is available free of charge through Oregon Health & Science University's Design to Learn Project ([www.designtolearn.com](http://www.designtolearn.com)).

- **Try it. You'll like it!**

design  
TO LEARN



EXPECTED LEVELS OF ABSOLUTE SPEAKING PROFICIENCY  
IN LANGUAGES TAUGHT AT THE FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE  
(Revised April 1973)

This chart was drawn up by the School of Language Studies of the Foreign Service Institute. It summarizes our experience with students as taught in our own classes rather than our judgments about the relative difficulty of these languages for speakers of English though there is undoubtedly some correlation. The expected speaking proficiency for a student with a given background and a given aptitude, in a given language, after a given number of weeks, will depend not only on the difficulty of the spoken language itself, but also on the amount of time and effort that the student has had to spend in concurrent study of the writing system.

**GROUP I:** Afrikaans, Danish, Dutch, French, Haitian Creole, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish

<u>Length of Training*</u>	<u>Aptitude for Language Learning</u>		
	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Superior</u>
8 weeks (240 hours)	1	1/1+	1+
16 weeks (480 hours)	1+	2	2+
24 weeks (720 hours)	2	2+	3

**GROUP II:** Bulgarian, Dari, Farsi, German, Greek, Hindi, Indonesian, Malay, Urdu

<u>Length of Training</u>	<u>Aptitude for Language Learning</u>		
	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Superior</u>
16 weeks (480 hours)	1	1/1+	1+2
24 weeks (720 hours)	1+	2	2+3
44 weeks (1320 hours)	2/2+	2+3	3/3+

**GROUP III:** Amharic, Bengali, Burmese, Czech, Finnish, Hebrew, Hungarian, Khmer (Cambodian), Lao, Nepali, Pilipino, Polish, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Sinhale, Thai, Tamil, Turkish, Vietnamese

<u>Length of Training</u>	<u>Aptitude for Language Learning</u>		
	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Superior</u>
16 weeks (480 hours)	0+	1	1/1+
24 weeks (720 hours)	1+	2	2/2+
44 weeks (1320 hours)	2	2+	3

**GROUP IV:** Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean

<u>Length of Training</u>	<u>Aptitude for Language Learning</u>		
	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Superior</u>
16 weeks (480 hours)	0+	1	1
24 weeks (720 hours)	1	1+	1+
44 weeks (1320 hours)	1+	2	2+
80-92 weeks (2400-2760 hours)	2+	3	3+

\*The number of hours is the theoretical maximum at 30 hours a week.



Heard the buzz? Friendly mason bees can make your gardening fruitful

Blazers win second road game in two days SPORTS, D1

THURSDAY  
FEBRUARY 25, 2010

# The Oregonian

\$1.00  
50 cents home-del.

BREAKING NEWS AT OREGONLIVE.COM

WINNER OF SEVEN PULITZER PRIZES

SUNRISE ED

## Showdown on health care alters the debate

**Stakes** | The president wants to frame the issue as a choice between GOP and Democratic plans

By STEVEN THOMMA and DAVID LIGHTMAN  
McCLATCHY-TRIBUNE

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama's nationally televised faceoff today with Republican lawmakers over health care is as much about politics as policy, more debate than negotiation.

Few think that Obama will be able to win Republican support for his proposals, especially for the new plan he'll bring with him that is larger and more expensive than the ones they previously rejected.

### Health care summit

**When:** 7 a.m. PST today

**TV:** C-Span3, CNN, MSNBC, Fox News Channel

**Online:** The conference will be live-streamed at c-span.org

Rather, he heads into the session hoping to transform the debate over health care from a referendum on Democrats' proposals — which he has been losing — into a choice between Democratic and Republican ideas over how to fix a system that both sides think needs fixing.

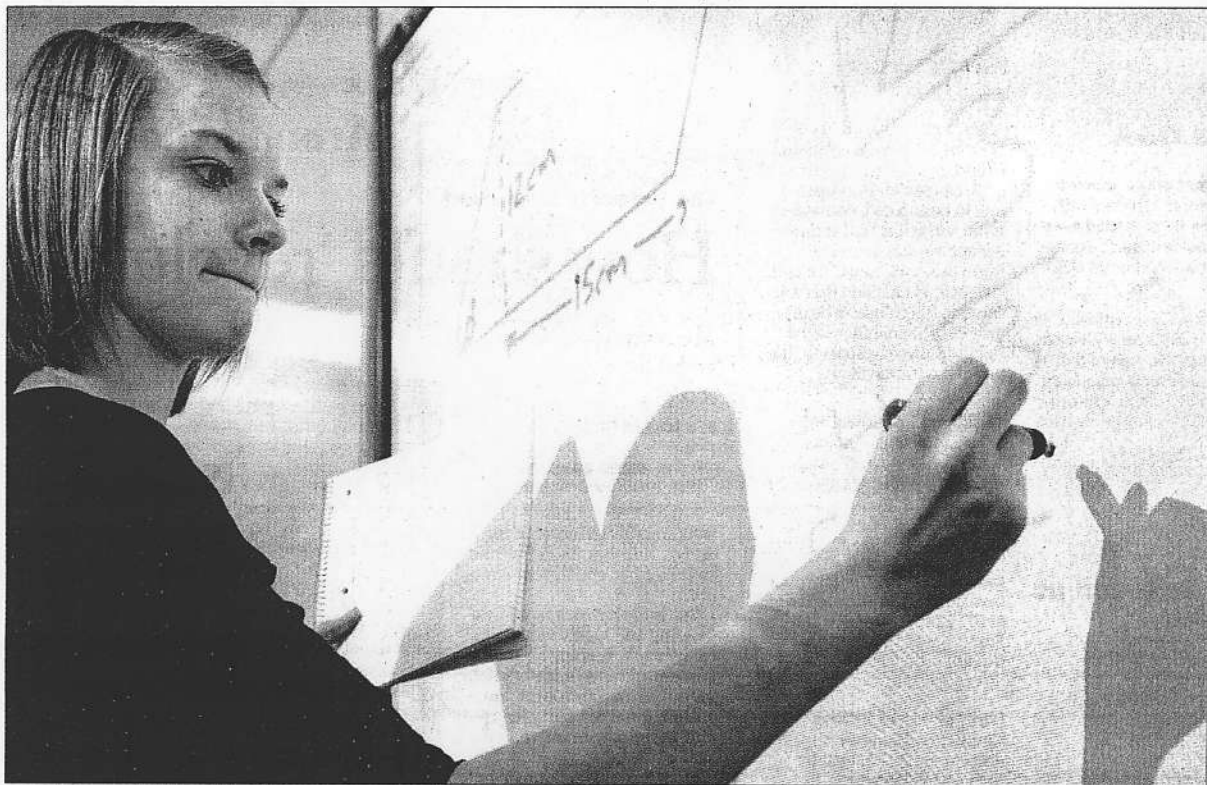
If he can win that debate in the eyes of the public, he could shore up support in Congress among nervous Democrats and perhaps push through some plan to extend coverage to more of the uninsured and try to rein in soaring costs. Moreover, he could change the dynamics of the coming elections for control of Congress and give his Democratic Party a better chance to ward off a tsunami of anger that's been building against them.

If he can't dominate the debate, his prospects for passing comprehensive health care legislation — and Democrats' prospects in the November elections — remain daunting.

Either way, both sides will sit down at a large square table in Blair House,

Please see **PERSUASION**, Page A4

## Schools explore 'proficiency'



BENJAMIN BRINK/THE OREGONIAN

Scappoose High sophomore Candice Thompson works to determine the area of a parallelogram, one of about 20 key skills she must master this term. Her math teacher, Mark Sprenger, uses proficiency-based education, which emphasizes demonstrating skills over homework and class participation.

### A new teaching method that discounts traditional scoring gets praise and pointed criticism

By WENDY OWEN, BETSY HAMMOND and MELISSA NAVAS  
THE OREGONIAN

Educators at more than two dozen Oregon high schools are teaching and grading their students in a new way that they say ramps up how much students learn and retain.

Known as "proficiency-based education," the approach is generating controversy because stu-



Track state and federal test results for every one of Oregon's 1,200 public schools at [schools.oregonlive.com](http://schools.oregonlive.com)

dents receive little to no credit for homework, attendance, classwork or extra credit — only for demonstrating knowledge of key material.

Teachers are using the method in Beaverton, Forest Grove, Portland and other districts

across Oregon.

Students must prove on tests, essays and other assignments that they've mastered the essential skills and content for the course. If they don't prove proficient the first time, they can redo tests or projects until they get them right.

Supporters say students emerge knowing their stuff. Strong students can forge ahead if they

Please see **PROFICIENCY**, Page A4

### Proficiency-based education: How it works

#### Traditional high school class

- Covers a wide array of skills and topics.
- Lessons are determined by teacher judgment. Some adhere to textbooks; some use other resources.
- Homework, class participation, assignments count heavily toward grade.
- High scores on some tests or assignments can offset weak scores on others; extra credit can boost a low grade.
- No do-overs if you fail a test.

#### Proficiency-based class

- Covers select skills and content, based on state standards.
- Each lesson is explicitly tied to a core skill; the teacher stays on each topic until most students demonstrate proficiency. Use of textbooks may be selective.
- Grade is based almost entirely on tests, essays and assignments that measure understanding of skills; homework and participation typically count 10 percent or less.
- Failing to pass a single standard can mean failing the course; students must relearn and retake tests or rewrite papers until each standard is met.
- Students can retake tests or redo papers.

# Proficiency: Teachers say new method is more work

Continued from Page One

demonstrate know-how, while teens who struggle can circle back and retest or rewrite until they prove they grasp the concept.

"I can't believe I didn't use this method for the past 10 years," says Mark Sprenger, a Scappoose High math teacher, who gets mis-eyed talking about students who failed math in the past but now are eager to relearn concepts, re-take quizzes and earn As.

But the idea is generating push-back from teachers, students and parents — particularly in Beaverton, where it's being used in various degrees at middle and high schools.

Some teachers resent the extra work required to re-teach and re-test outside class. Many students prefer the traditional paths to good grades and balk at having to re-take tests until they demonstrate knowledge of every skill.

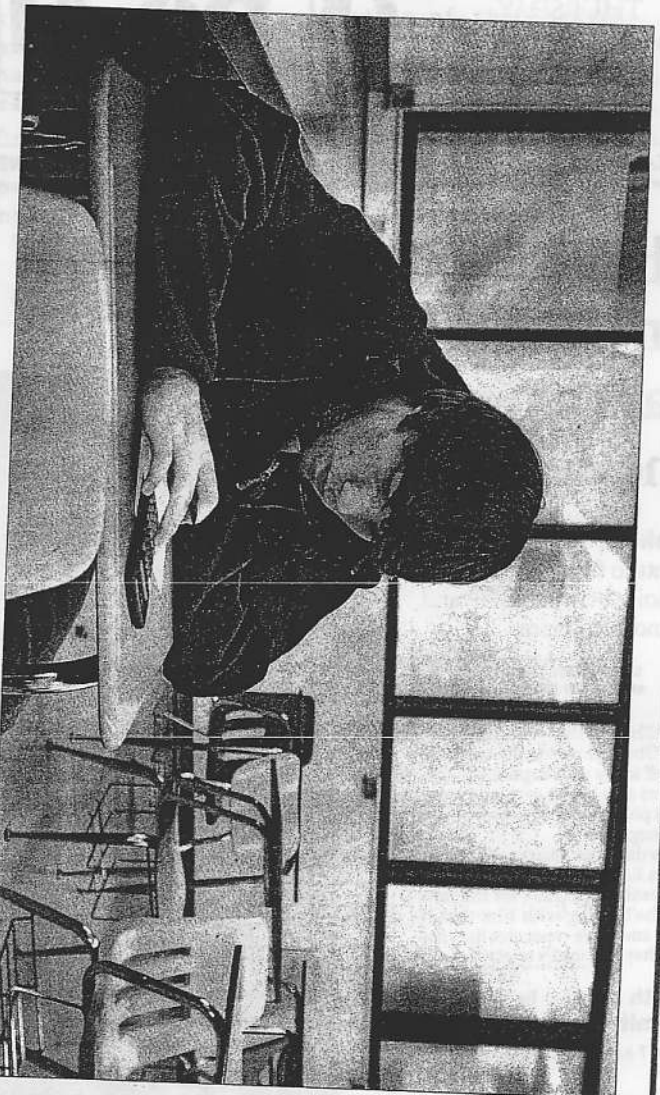
Critics say that switching to the proficiency method means throwing out established ways of teaching and grading for an approach that's gotten lots of hype but has little hard evidence that it works better.

This month, Beaverton officials agreed to return to using traditional letter grades on middle school progress reports instead of marking "proficient," "highly proficient" and "not yet proficient."

Two Beaverton middle schools started a Facebook page called "I Hate The Proficiency Scale" that has drawn more than 850 fans and allowed students, parents and teachers to post their frustrations about grading inconsistencies and fears of falling grade-point averages.

Advocates of the proficiency method include the Oregon Department of Education and the Business Education Compact, a Beaverton nonprofit started by high-tech employers.

Before, "students were accumulating points instead of accu-



BEAVERTON BRINK/THE OREGONIAN  
Scappoose High sophomore Ryan Schmid retakes a geometry quiz during his lunch break. Because his math class is taught and graded using the proficiency method, he can retake quizzes multiple times. As long as students demonstrate that they have all the key skills, they pass the class.

mutating knowledge," says Tamara Busch-Johnsen, head of the business compact. "They'd go off to college and wonder why they need to take remedial courses."

When students earn their credits this way, we'll know that our high school diploma stands for something.

Oregon's application for \$200 million of federal education money says that proficiency-based teaching will be a centerpiece of the state's school reform push in the next few years.

Hal Plotkin, senior education adviser to President Barack Obama's administration, says proficiency-based education is an antidote to boredom in the classroom and a way to make sure that students are being exposed to the most relevant education possible.

Already the approach is used in places as diverse as Redmond, Hermiston, Falls City, Albany, Gresham, Roseburg and Lincoln City.

Scappoose High was an early architect of the idea. Teachers don't have to use it, but everyone who does, including the entire

math department, is enthusiastic.

Some students still balk, but many are fans.

"I like that I can move at my own pace," says freshman Julia Grabhorn, who charged through two terms of algebra in a single term and advanced into geometry midyear by demonstrating mastery of key skills.

When she got ahead of her class, she had to teach herself some skills and learn others from older schoolmates, but she says that worked fine.

"In a traditional class, we have students who are bored," says teacher David Richardson. "If they know it, why should we slow them down?"

## Mixed results

Step into a class using the proficiency approach and it can feel much the same as a class using traditional methods, only with new lingo.

Forest Grove High mandated that every teacher use proficiency this fall.

"It used to be in the first six weeks, if a student got an F, they gave up," says Principal John

O'Neill. "Now, they have all year to bring up the grade by re-taking until they get that skill."

Amanda Nichols is among the students who have blossomed, moving from Ds and Cs to As and Bs.

Typically, Nichols does homework only until she understands the concept. Under the old system, she received incompletes, which pulled down her grades.

Now, homework, work ethic and other skills account for only 10 percent of her grade. The rest is her ability to demonstrate knowledge.

Proficiency has had the opposite effect on her freshman brother, who used to get straight As.

"It's working well for one but not the other," says Hista Nichols, their mother. "He's not as willing to go in after school to re-take tests."

Despite that, she says, her kids seem to be grasping more in their classes. "It's not just doing the homework and turning it in; they do seem to be getting it."

## More work for teachers

In Beaverton, Westview parent

Marks also had to fit in time at school for students to re-take tests.

This year, she's more efficient, having learned to squeeze in re-takes during the day. But she says she still works at least 50 hours a week.

As a result, some teacher unions have taken notice, including Forest Grove's and Beaverton's.

Beaverton Education Association President David Wilkinson says some teachers are supportive, while others see a lack of time and training. "It's such a major cultural shift," he says.

Some Beaverton teachers who dislike the system say they are afraid to speak up because of possible repercussions. They have more papers to grade but aren't given more time. They also question whether proficiency has proved effective.

Evidence is slight because it's new and began primarily among high school freshmen, who do not take state tests.

"We know we need better data about how kids from these classes are doing," says David Wood, Portland's director of high school curriculum.

About 100 Portland high school teachers use the proficiency method primarily in algebra and geometry. Fewer students now fail those courses, but the district wants to see whether their performance on the state math test also improves, Wood says.

The longest track record of proficiency teaching is in the Westview High math department. The rate of Westview students who meet state math benchmarks has risen — but so have scores in reading and writing, which were taught using traditional methods.

At Scappoose High, math achievement had long been mediocre. The share of students passing the state math test shot up last spring, to 62 percent from 47 percent in 2008.

Oregon education leaders predict proficiency will spread to more schools.

"Teachers are engaging each other, saying 'How are you making it work in this subject?'" says Colleen Miltcham, assistant state superintendent for improvement and innovation.

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Wendy Owen, 503-294-5961; wendyowen@news.oregonian.com

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BERLIN — Germany's top Protestant cleric resigned Wednesday after she was caught driving with a blood-alcohol level three times the legal limit, an incident that she said had undermined her authority.

Margot Kaessmann, who was elected last October as the first woman to head Germany's Lutheran church, said she was quitting that post and her job as bishop of Hannover immediately.

"I made a serious mistake that I regret deeply," Kaessmann, 51, said in a statement to a televised news conference.

My heart tells me very clearly that I cannot remain in office with the necessary authority."

During her brief time in office, Kaessmann proved willing to give the Protestant church a voice of authority, wading into key political issues including the war in Afghanistan. Her resignation, despite support from

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TONIGHT @ 5