

Philosophy

The 100-point grading scale has a storied history in our schools. Current educational research, however, has questioned its validity and caused our district, along with countless others throughout the state and country, to examine whether it was the best means for measuring student achievement. A grading system must serve to produce a score that demonstrates the overall degree of student learning, just as a single grade in the gradebook must be an accurate representation of a student's progress towards learning the required content and material of their class. An over-reliance on imperfect mathematical systems has made school a game of point-chasing versus an experience of learning and mastery. While a grading system cannot change classroom instruction, we believe that a well-conceived method of evaluation can provide teachers and students a framework to succeed at the highest levels.

At a Glance

Smyrna School District Secondary Grading

Using Letter Grades

For those used to seeing numbers 0 - 100 in the gradebook, the Smyrna School District grading system will look slightly different. Our grading method is based on a 4-point scale anchored in the letter grades A, B, C, D, and F. Each of these grades in the gradebook carries a score that is calculated against a conversion table to provide an overall grade. The system utilizes the plus and minus designations to more accurately measure student learning and understanding while providing increased clarity of a student's progress toward learning targets.

The Importance of School-Home Communication

The connection between the school and a child's home is vitally important. At the forefront of this relationship should be an open line of communication between classroom teachers and parents/guardians. While there are interim progress reports and quarterly report cards as well as scheduled parent-teacher conferences, parents should feel empowered to contact teachers with any concerns about their child's performance in school. Parents are, likewise, encouraged to use Home Access Center, an online portal for parents, to gain instant access to their child's grades.

Weighted Categories

Within the grade book, evidence of student learning is entered into three categories. The chart below illustrates the weights of these categories.

Category	Weight
Preparation	1x
Practice	3x
Product	5x

Products of Learning are major assessments and projects that are summative measures of student learning, and are, therefore, counted the most with a weight of 5. That means that the grade on a Product of Learning is counted five times. Likewise, Practices for Learning are formative assignments that students practice the skill and develop understanding and shall carry a weight of 3; meaning that this grade is counted three times. Small assignments and activities are placed in the Preparation for Learning category and only count one time.

Beyond High School

Understandably, many students and parents worry about the effect this grading system may have on student eligibility for college and scholarships. The use of letter grades in our grade book, has no impact on a student's transcript. The documents have always been based on the 4.0 letter scale and remain unchanged as a result of our secondary grading system. Our school counseling department has worked with many colleges and NCAA to ensure that our students will be given every opportunity to succeed beyond high school.

Knowledge & Effort

The focus of our grading system is squarely on student learning. We work hard to make sure that outside influences do not impact the evaluation of student ability. This means that positive grade inflation (extra credit) as well as non-academic penalties (taking points off for lateness) have been eliminated from a student's grade. In doing so, many of the "effort" grades have been taken out of the gradebook. This does not mean that we do not appreciate the hard work and effort of our students. On both the interim progress reports and quarterly report cards, teachers will provide feedback on each child's work ethic in class. When coupled with a grade that purely reflects student understanding, we believe the result will be an accurate picture of a student's performance in school.

Classroom Impact

Our district grading policy does not impact the content, rigor, or classroom demands that are required of our courses. The classes still cover the same material, and students are required to demonstrate mastery of the core grade-level knowledge that is expected in each course. The grading policy is designed to more accurately reflect students knowledge, and allows both teachers and students to focus on the most important aspect of education; student learning.