

NCCS Grading and Reporting Frequently Asked Questions

Revised 11/08/06

- 1) How were the grading guidelines developed?
 - All teachers in our district were given a detailed survey on grading and reporting.
 - A grading committee was formed with 43 members representing all grade levels and subject areas.
 - The grading committee studied the survey results to understand the current state of grading in our district.
 - The grading committee read books and articles dealing with grading issues, and some members attended grading seminars.
 - The grading committee met for two full days and continued to communicate through email and district mail.
 - Subcommittees met several other times.
 - The grading committee studied many issues related to grading and developed guidelines for six main areas.
 - The guidelines will be expanded and revised as the grading committee continues to meet, and additional members are added as needed.

- 2) Who served on the grading committee?
 - District members
 - Diane Oplinger – Gifted and Talented Director
 - Eric Curts – Technology Specialist
 - Matt Ile – Elementary Instructional Supervisor
 - Peg Deibel – Secondary Instructional Supervisor
 - Peggy McClain – Director of Curriculum
 - Vicki Hammond – Special Education Director
 - High School members
 - Angela Smith – Language Arts
 - Ann Sowd – Science
 - Barbara Tarantino – Guidance
 - Carol Green – Math
 - Darrell Woods – Science
 - Gina Mogus – World Languages
 - Glenn Cummings – Social Studies
 - Janet Baran – Art
 - Mary Splittorf – Language Arts, Vocational
 - Peggy Savage – Assistant Principal
 - Sheila Ramos – World Languages
 - Tina Cindea – Math
 - Tony Pallija – Principal
 - Middle School members
 - Carrie Stehura – Language Arts
 - Dave Oerter – Social Studies
 - Eileen Nielson – Special Education

- Gemma Giannantonio – Math
- Heather Neutzling – Science
- Jerome Nist – Computer Science
- Laura Konowal – Math
- Marcie Soehnlen – Social Studies
- Marjorie McDougal – Assistant Principal
- Todd Dannemiller – Science
- Clearmount Elementary members
 - Anne Pastier – Grade 3
 - Tom McKinnon – Grade 5
- Greentown Elementary members
 - Don McCallister – Grade 5
 - Mark Yocum – Grade 3
 - Terrie Horn – Grade 3
- Northwood Elementary members
 - Benny Griffiths – Principal
 - Diane Terse – Grade 2
 - Jen Roden - Music
 - Joanne Damico – Gifted Education
 - Karen Spalding – Grade 4
 - Sue Peldunas – Grade 3
- Orchard Hill Elementary members
 - Jan Bremer – Physical Education
 - Sue Oryszak – Grade 1
- Kindergarten Center members
 - Kerrie Steeplton – Grade K

3) Does research and/or literature support the guidelines?

- Yes, the grading committee read the works of many leaders in the field of grading and reporting. The guidelines are strongly supported by the following works:
 - Ken O’Connor – *Grading for Learning*
 - Robert Marzano – *Transforming Classroom Grading*
 - Thomas Gusky – many articles

4) Why were the grading guidelines developed?

- To increase consistency throughout the district
- To improve communication with parents, students, guidance counselors, other teachers, colleges, future employers, and more
- To diagnose student weaknesses earlier and more accurately so that children can get the help they need
- To more accurately measure our students’ achievement of the Ohio Academic Content Standards and district Courses of Study
- They were NOT developed to decrease grades.
- They were NOT developed to increase grades.

- They were NOT developed to make our schools be more like other schools, colleges, or any other institutions.

5) Why is consistency important?

- The guidelines address certain core practices that need to be consistent throughout the district.
- Consistency in grading practices increases fairness for children. With consistent practices it does not matter which elementary school your child attends, which middle school team he or she gets put on, or which high school teacher he or she gets for a particular subject. You and your child will know that he or she will get the same grade for the same work regardless of the teacher.
- Consistency also improves communication. From teacher to teacher and year to year, grades will mean the same thing, which will help everyone involved understand the information being reported.

6) How do the grading guidelines improve communication?

- Because the guidelines provide consistency in grading, the grades students get will mean the same thing from teacher to teacher. For example, everyone will have a much better understanding and agreement on what an “A” means and what it takes to earn one.
- Communication is also improved because what a grade means is made more specific. If a nine-weeks grade is a combination of achievement, effort, behavior, attitude, attendance, and more it can be nearly impossible to break apart the grade to understand the student’s individual strengths and weaknesses. Rather than combining all of these factors, nine-weeks grades will come from a child’s practice and achievement of the academic content of the class.
- The guidelines also improve communication by sharing more information on interims and report cards such as Academic Achievement, Academic Practice, attendance, effort, behavior, and more. Some of this is happening as of the 2003-2004 school year, and more will occur as interims and report cards are redesigned to accommodate the extra information.

7) How do the grading guidelines help diagnose student weaknesses?

- Grades will more accurately reflect what a student really knows, since the grades will primarily come from the student’s Academic Achievement.
- Academic Practice will affect a smaller amount of the student’s grade.
- Factors such as behavior, participation, and attitude will not be calculated into the grade at all, unless they are specifically part of the academic requirements for that course.
- Factors other than Academic Achievement can greatly influence a student’s grade so that it no longer accurately represents what the child knows.
- If students grades are inappropriately inflated, weaknesses can be hidden by the increased grade so that they “fall through the cracks” and don’t get the help they really need.
- When a child’s grade accurately reflects what he or she knows, weaknesses can be found early and the child can get the help he or she needs before the problem increases.

- 8) Are the grading guidelines a big change for our school district?
- Not necessarily. Many of our teachers have been following practices very similar to the guidelines for many years on their own.
 - Many teachers have taken the time to calculate their grades using the new system and whatever old system they were using. They have found that the nine-week grades have not changed by more than one or two percentage points.

9) What is Academic Practice?

- Whenever a student learns new material he or she goes through a time of wrestling with the material before eventually mastering the information or skills. It is expected that a student will make some mistakes during this learning process. Any work done during this learning period is considered Academic Practice.
- The purpose of Academic Practice is not to judge a student's final achievement of a topic, but to evaluate where he or she is in the learning process, diagnose any problems, and aid in getting the help needed to learn the material.
- Academic Practice could consist of many different types of assessments including, but not limited to:
 - Some quizzes
 - Some homework
 - First drafts of writing
 - Teacher questions during instruction
 - Some worksheets
 - Informal observations
 - Pre-testing

10) What is Academic Achievement?

- After a student has had sufficient instruction and practice on a topic, it is then reasonable to judge their mastery of the information or skills. Any work done at that point is considered Academic Achievement.
- The purpose of Academic Achievement is to evaluate how well a student has learned the material.
- Academic Achievement could consist of many different types of assessments including, but not limited to:
 - Tests (written, oral, and performance)
 - Some quizzes
 - Some homework
 - Writings (term papers, essays, stories, etc.)
 - Projects
 - Presentations

11) How do you distinguish between Academic Practice and Academic Achievement?

- If a student is learning something for the first time, or is still in the early stages of learning the material, it is Academic Practice.
- If a student has had sufficient instruction and practice on a topic, so that it is fair to judge him or her on the material, then it is Academic Achievement.

- You do NOT distinguish between Academic Practice and Academic Achievement by the type of assessment it is. For example, homework is NOT necessarily Academic Practice, quizzes are NOT necessarily Academic Achievement, etc.

12) Why are Academic Practice and Academic Achievement weighted differently?

- Academic Achievement is weighted more heavily than Academic Practice. For example, at the high school level Academic Practice cannot count for more than 15% of the nine-week grade. At the Middle School and Grades 4 and 5, Academic Practice counts for 20% of the nine-week grade.
- It is not fair to weigh Academic Practice more heavily for several reasons:
 - On the one hand, if you grade a student's Academic Practice for correctness, most often the grade will be incorrectly lowered. This is because during Academic Practice a student is still learning the material, and it is reasonable to expect mistakes. It is not fair to judge a student heavily on material when he or she is still in the process of learning it.
 - On the other hand, if you grade a student's Academic Practice for completion, most often the grade will be incorrectly raised. This is because he or she will be getting grades for merely completing work. The fact that a student completed an assignment does not give any information on how well he or she learned the material.
- In summary, to be an accurate measure of what a student has learned, a nine-weeks grade needs to be based primarily on work that was actually graded for correctness, at a time when the student has had sufficient instruction and practice to be held responsible for the material. Therefore Academic Achievement is weighted more heavily.

13) How was the 85% - 15% split for the high school determined?

- The percentage split was developed by a representative group of high school teachers.
- They studied printouts showing the effects of different splits including 95-5, 90-10, 85-15, 80-20, and 75-25, to determine what was a reasonable value for Academic Practice.
- They discussed what percentage splits teachers in the high school were currently using.
- They arrived at a maximum of 15% for Academic Practice as a value that would:
 - give reasonable weight to such work;
 - not overly inflate or reduce a student's academic grade with non-achievement factors;
 - and be consistent with what many teachers in the high school were already doing.

14) How was the 80% - 20% split for the middle school determined?

- The percentage split was developed by a representative group of middle school teachers.
- They conducted a "Parallel Grading" study to investigate the effect of different percentage splits.
- They studied printouts showing the effects of different splits including 95-5, 90-10, 85-15, 80-20, and 75-25, to determine what was a reasonable value for Academic Practice.
- They discussed what percentage splits teachers in the middle school were currently using.
- They arrived at 20% for Academic Practice as a value that would:
 - give reasonable weight to such work;
 - not overly inflate or reduce a student's academic grade with non-achievement factors;
 - and be consistent with what many teachers in the middle school were already doing.

15) Why is the percentage for Academic Practice different at the middle school and grades 4 and 5 than it is at the high school?

- Students at the middle school and grades 4 and 5 are still “learning how to learn”. It is reasonable to expect their study skills to be less developed than they will be when they are high school students.
- To help develop good learning habits of practicing and studying, a slightly higher weight was given to Academic Practice at the middle school (20%) than the high school (15%).

16) Is it true that tests will now count for 80% (MS/4/5) or 85% (HS) of a student’s grade?

- No, that is not true.
- Academic Achievement will count for 80% (MS/4/5) or 85% (HS) of a student’s grade.
- Traditional written tests are merely one type of assessment that may be included in the 80% (MS/4/5) or 85% (HS).
- Students should be measured with a variety of assessments to take into account their individual strengths and weaknesses.
- The 80% (MS/4/5) or 85% (HS) should come from several of the following:
 - Tests (written, oral, and performance)
 - Some quizzes
 - Some homework
 - Writings (term papers, essays, stories, etc.)
 - Projects
 - Presentations
 - And more

17) Is it true that homework will now count for 15% (HS) or 20% (MS/4/5) of a student’s grade?

- No, that is not true.
- Academic Practice will count for 15% (HS) or 20% (MS/4/5) of a student’s grade.
- Homework may be part of both Academic Practice and Academic Achievement, depending upon the assignment. For example, when a student first learns a concept, that night’s homework would most probably be Academic Practice. However, the chapter review homework at the end of a unit would most probably be Academic Achievement.
- Students should be measured with a variety of assessments to take into account their individual strengths and weaknesses.
- The 15% (HS) or 20% (MS/4/5) should come from several of the following:
 - Some quizzes
 - Some homework
 - First drafts of writing
 - Teacher questions during instruction
 - Some worksheets
 - Informal observations
 - Pre-testing

18) If Academic Practice is only 15% (HS) or 20% (MS/4/5) of the nine-week grade, why should a student bother with doing it?

- Even at 15%, Academic Practice can greatly affect the final grade.

- Case 1 – How not doing Academic Practice would decrease a grade: If a student has an Academic Achievement grade of 100%, but does no Academic Practice work, his or her final grade would become 85%. That would be a change from an “A” to a “C”.
- Case 2 – How doing Academic Practice would increase a grade: If a student has a failing Academic Achievement grade of 65%, but gets a 100% for their Academic Practice, their final grade will be a passing grade of 70%.
- Next, the purpose of Academic Practice work is to give a student experience with new material, evaluate if he or she is learning it, and provide additional instruction or practice if needed. If the Academic Practice work is not done, those benefits are lost, and the grades on the Academic Achievement will probably decrease as a result.
- Finally, failing to do work is a behavioral problem and will result in behavioral consequences.

19) Will the grading guidelines decrease my child’s grades?

- Maybe. Although the guidelines are not designed to intentionally raise or lower grades, some changes could occur as described below.
- In the past if your child’s grade has been increased by good behavior, good attitude, a heavy weight on Academic Practice work, or a heavy weight on extra credit, the grade could now be lower as the guidelines limit the amount of influence those factors can have on the academic grade.
- This is not intended to punish the child in any way, but, in fact, is designed to get him or her the help needed. If a student does not understand the material, but the grade is inflated by non-academic factors, then his or her academic weakness may go undetected for some time. With an artificially inflated grade the student may “fall through the cracks” until he or she does poorly on a standardized test such as the Proficiency tests or OGT.
- If a child gets a lower grade it will alert everyone involved to his or her academic weakness. It is necessary to get this accurate information as early as possible, when there is still adequate time to get the student the help needed to truly learn the material.
- Also, although behavior and attitude are not included in the academic grade, they are very important and will be rewarded and reported separately.
- Finally, many teachers are finding that the guidelines are not all that different from what they were already doing, and their grades are only changing one or two percentage points at the most.

20) Will the grading guidelines increase my child’s grades?

- Maybe. Although the guidelines are not designed to intentionally raise or lower grades, some changes could occur as described below.
- In the past if your child’s grade has been decreased by poor behavior, poor attitude, or a heavy weight on Academic Practice work, the grade could now be higher as the guidelines limit the amount of influence those factors can have on the academic grade.
- Although behavior and attitude are not included in the academic grade, they are very important and poor behavior and attitude will be dealt with and reported separately.
- Finally, many teachers are finding that the guidelines are not all that different from what they were already doing, and their grades are only changing one or two percentage points

at the most.

21) Can students still get extra credit?

- Yes, extra credit and bonus points are supported by the guidelines.
- The guidelines do limit how much extra credit and bonus points can count for and the type of work that can qualify as extra credit or bonus points.

22) What do the guidelines say about extra credit?

- Extra credit is additional academic work that is related to what is being studied in the class.
- It is not non-academic work such as bringing in supplies, merely attending an event, or doing anything not directly related to what is being learned in class.
- It can count for up 2% of the nine-week grade.
- A teacher does not have to offer extra credit, but if he or she does, it needs to be something that every student has the chance to take advantage of.
- Extra credit should not be a “last minute” attempt to raise a grade at the end of a grading period, but should be incorporated throughout the entire nine-weeks.

23) What do the guidelines say about bonus points?

- Bonus points come from extra questions added onto an assignment, like at the end of a test or quiz.
- Bonus points cannot count for more than 5% of the assessment they are on.
- Examples of what could be used for bonus points include:
 - Practice OGT / Proficiency / ACT / SAT questions
 - Material from previous course work
 - Information discussed or covered in class that was not asked on the assessment
 - Higher-level questions
- Bonus points are optional.

24) What is the difference between extra credit and bonus points?

- Extra credit opportunities are “stand-alone” assignments, whereas bonus points are extra questions on another assessment such as a test or quiz.

25) Is it true that behavior, participation, attitude, and effort will not count toward a student’s grade?

- In most cases this is true.
- However, in some courses these factors may be part of the academic content of the course itself, in which case they would be part of the academic grade.
- For example, in a culinary arts course the academic requirements of the course include proper behavior when serving customers in the restaurant. In this case “behavior” is actually something the students are being taught in the course, and therefore need to be graded on. On the other hand, “behavior” is not an academic topic in a mathematics class.
- Another example would be participation. Depending upon how it is used, participation may be part of the academic grade. If participation is simply keeping track of which

students answer lots of questions in class, then it is really not a measure of what they know, but rather who has the most outgoing personality. On the other hand, if a teacher has structured in-class questions in such a way that every student has the opportunity and expectation to participate, then the “participation” is really “oral assessment,” which is an acceptable way to measure a student’s academic knowledge.

26) Why do behavior, participation, attitude, and effort not count toward a student’s grade?

- In most cases these factors will not be included in a student’s grade. There are several reasons for this.
- One reason why these factors are not calculated into the student’s grade is because, by their very nature, they are already influencing the grade.
 - For example, if a student behaves well, participates frequently, has a good attitude, and puts forth a strong effort, his or her grade will naturally improve. Giving good grades for these factors would be a double benefit for that student, artificially inflating the grade.
 - On the other hand, if a student does not behave well, participates infrequently, has a poor attitude, and puts forth little effort, the grade will naturally be hurt. Giving low grades for these factors would be a double jeopardy for that student, artificially decreasing the grade.
- Another reason for not calculating these factors into the academic grade is that they are very difficult to define and measure. Although there is some subjectivity to all grading, factors such as effort and attitude are more open to personal interpretation and difficult to accurately measure.
- Additionally, it is not necessarily fair to count some of these factors as they are more a product of personality than academics. A child who is shy, depressed, or insecure may not show a positive attitude, although he or she may understand the material perfectly. A student who masters material quickly, or works best at home, may not need to display much effort in class.
- Furthermore, since these factors are behavioral in nature, they should receive behavioral rewards and consequences, rather than academic rewards and consequences. There are many age-appropriate ways that a teacher can respond to students’ good and bad behavior other than increasing or decreasing their grades. Additionally, making “the punishment fit the crime” helps students understand the natural consequences of their mistakes.
- Finally, by keeping non-academic factors out of the grade, the grade can accurately represent a student’s academic achievement. As such, the grade can assist to diagnose a student’s weaknesses and allow him or her to get the needed help.

27) What will be done to report behavior, participation, attitude, and effort?

- To some degree these items are already being reported as follows:
 - Elementary report cards have checklist sections for this information.
 - Middle school and high school report cards allow the teacher to include comments on these areas.
- Over the next year all grade levels will be working on redesigning their interims and report cards to include these non-academic items.

28) What do the guidelines say about late work?

- Late work that is Academic Practice can be completed up until the final Academic Achievement assessment for that section/chapter/unit.
- Such late work will get some credit up until that time, with the amount of credit to be determined by the teachers of that grade level or subject area.
- In addition to having the grade lowered for the late work, a student may receive behavioral punishments for not turning in the work.
- After that final assessment, any missing Academic Practice work will receive a failing grade.

29) Why is some credit given for late work up until the final assessment for that unit/section/chapter?

- The purpose of Academic Practice work is to evaluate how a student is learning new material so that additional instruction and practice can be given if needed to help the student.
- If a student is given a zero for a late assignment, it is doubtful that he or she will then complete the assignment. In such a case a student is never getting practice with that material and the feedback is lost. The Academic Achievement assessment, which is worth much more, may be the first time such work is attempted.
- If some credit is given for the work, there is a greater chance that the student will complete it and get the practice needed.

30) How will the new grading policy impact seniors as they send college/scholarship applications this year?

- This year's grades will not become part of the transcript until the end of the first semester. Only the semester average will appear. Nine week and exam grades have never been listed on the permanent record. Since most college applications are sent in by February 1st, senior grades historically have had little effect on the transcript.