

Administrative Guidelines

5421A - PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICES FOR GRADING AND REPORTING

Using grades as a means of reporting achievement has always been a fundamental component of education. Report cards—a communication tool between home and school—have remained essentially unchanged since the days of the one-room schoolhouse. The hand-written report card has been replaced with a computer-generated report, but the information provided still tends to be very much the same.

As critical of a component as grades have been to the operation of schools, there has historically been a great deal of inconsistency and disagreement around exactly what a given grade represents and how it is determined. Further, it has been not at all uncommon in education for there to be great variability from teacher to teacher in terms of what criteria factor into a grade and how it is calculated, even among teachers who teach the same grade level and subject matter.

For the sake of clarity, our **definition of a grade** is *a generic symbol used to represent a student's mastery level of key concepts directly connected to the Ohio Content Standards. A grade reflects a student's performance on assessments and learning tasks.*

Further, the **purpose of grading and reporting grades** in Galion City Schools is *to communicate to all stakeholders (students, families, and educators) the student's level of understanding and performance relative to grade level expectations.*

In order to provide the most accurate and meaningful information to families, teachers, and students, Galion City School District has taken steps to create a common understanding around what grades mean and how they are determined. This document provides practical guidelines for assigning grades, as well as the fundamental beliefs which underscore each of these guidelines. The document remains a work in progress. As we continue to learn more and as all stakeholders in the process of educating our children continue to work together, we will incorporate any changes that are necessary to better meet our stated purpose of grading and reporting.

GRADING GUIDELINES

- Guideline #1** Reports of student progress are based on a collection of evidence that demonstrate student grade-level understanding based on the Ohio Content Standards.
- Guideline #2** Grades are determined primarily on summative assessments/tasks (at eighty percent (80%)).
- Guideline #3** To ensure that a grade truly reflects mastery of Ohio Content Standards, flexible deadlines and/or reassessment are necessary. It is still the student's responsibility to complete all assigned tasks to the best of their ability in a timely manner.
- Guideline #4** Behaviors/conduct are reported separately and not factored in the determination of a student's grade.

Key Definitions

1. **Mastery** means exemplary performance in relationship to the grade-level standard. Evidence includes an in-depth understanding, and the student is able to consistently demonstrate knowledge, skill, and application across any assessment method. Furthermore, the student will retain the demonstrated knowledge/skill and be able to integrate and build upon it in the future.
2. **Proficiency** means that the student has a solid understanding of the grade-level standard. S/He has successfully demonstrated acquisition of the knowledge/skill on a majority of assessments, but not necessarily in a consistent manner across all assessment methods. The student will retain a majority of the demonstrated knowledge/skills, but may require further development to successfully apply this knowledge in the future.

Guideline #1: Reports of student progress are based on a collection of evidence that demonstrate student grade-level understanding based on the Ohio Content Standards.

1. Ohio Learning Standards exist for all core content areas (math, English-language arts, science, and social studies). These standards are designed with the intent of ensuring that students are college/career ready when they graduate high school. For all other subject areas, the district has adopted local curricula based on state and national standards for each specialized area. Every lesson in every class is expected to be directly tied to curriculum standards. Grades, whether they be for a particular assignment or as a summary mark of achievement for a reporting period, are a direct reflection of a student's knowledge and skill in relationship to the defined academic standards.
2. Because *mastery* or *exceeding standard* is the ultimate goal for every student, it is not rare for students to need more than one opportunity to demonstrate skill/knowledge of a given standard. This means that a final judgment about a student's attainment of a standard will typically not be made based on a single assessment.
3. The practice of mathematically averaging points across multiple assignments and assessments in order to produce a final summary (report card) grade can result in a skewed, inaccurate representation of a student's overall skill/knowledge. Such inaccurate representation occurs whenever one or a few extremely low scores significantly pulls down the average. In these cases, teachers are to deviate from the mathematical average and use their professional judgment to assign a final quarter/semester/course grade. This judgment is based on all of the evidence available so that the grade best represents the student's overall skill/knowledge with regard to the standards for the given period.
 - a. With professional judgment providing the ultimate determination of a grade, teachers must be able to explain their justification for any grade that is assigned, based upon the philosophies and practices defined in this document. To support the development and refinement of teacher professional judgment in assigning grades, professional development and collaboration are necessary.
 - b. Teachers should engage in ongoing collaboration within their teams/departments to ensure that their grading decisions are as consistent as possible.
4. There is no district-recognized "minimum fifty percent (50%) score" policy in Galion City Schools. However, it is widely recognized and well-established that the inclusion of "zero" scores in the mathematical averaging of grades is a counter-productive and inaccurate practice. In the case of missing assignments, teachers, as experts at diagnosing student skill in their content area, will use their professional judgment in assigning grades (as described above).

5. Extra Credit

The purpose of extra credit is to **provide additional academic opportunities in order to enhance the learning of course standards**. The following are examples of this type of extra credit:

- a. Viewing a play studied in class and writing a critical review
- b. Challenge questions at the end of a chapter review
- c. Items designed and created by the student

Types of extra credit to avoid:

- a. Teacher created or directed assignments
- b. Book reports, usually repeats something done in an earlier grade or other class
- c. Reports that could simply be copied for other sources

The following are examples of work that **will not count** for extra credit:

- a. Nonacademic work such as bringing in materials, bathroom pass usage, merely attending extra-curricular events, signed mid-term/permission slips, covering books, paying lab fees, and charitable donations not related to course objectives.

Guidelines for applications of extra credit:

- a. A teacher is not required to offer extra credit in any given course. Teachers of the same course will agree to any offering of extra credit.
- b. In any given class in which extra credit is offered, all students in that class are eligible to earn extra credit.
- c. Extra credit should be initiated and designed by the student with guidance from the teacher. If it is suggested by the student, they will be more responsible.

Extra credit should encourage learning as opposed to a last minute effort to raise a quarterly grade.

6. Enrichment work needs to be available for students to demonstrate evidence of "exceeding" the grade level standard.
7. Students who are struggling and/or experience academic difficulties will be provided support through the Response to Intervention (RTI) Team. Students will be given additional instruction and support based on research based practices.
8. Students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), who have been **provided and documented** accommodations, modifications, and/or specially designed instruction, by both the intervention specialist and general education teacher, are graded based on grade-level expectations outlined by the Ohio Content Standards. This includes all students, according to the student's disability, giftedness, or language proficiency. IEPs, 504 plans, Written Education Plans (WEPs), and similar documents outline supports and services which may be necessary for students to access the curriculum effectively, but they rarely lower the standards for grade-level learning.
9. Grade reporting protocol for newcomers (new to the country with no or severely limited English proficiency) will be based on information provided by English Language Placement test and the administration on an individual basis.

K-2 Standards-Based Reporting

1. At the elementary level (Kindergarten through grade 2), Galion City Schools are using a fully standards-based reporting system. This means that, instead of traditional letter grades being reported on report cards, the actual skills and knowledge that students are expected to attain are listed with the student's achievement status designated for each (see below).

Elementary Academic Performance Key for Reading

A	Accelerated	Student is reading and/or comprehending above grade level.
B	Benchmark	Student is reading and comprehending at grade level.
S	Strategic	Student is reading and/or comprehending below grade level.
I	Intensive	Student reading and/or comprehending at least a year below grade level.

Elementary Academic Performance Key for Specific Standards

M	Mastery	Student demonstrates a strong understanding of the skill or concept.
MP	Making Progress	Student is continually making progress toward demonstrating mastery of the skill or concept.
LP	Limited Progress	Student is making little progress in demonstrating mastery of the skill or concept.
NP	No Progress	Student is not making progress towards demonstrating mastery of the skill or concept.

Blank – Standard is not being assessed during the grading period.

2. Rather than attempt to report on every one of the numerous learning standards, standards are combined into a limited number of "power standards" describing the critical skills/knowledge for each subject area at each grade level, K-2. Reporting in terms of these power standards makes the process more manageable, understandable, and meaningful. The fourth quarter grade will be the final grade of the year as it most accurately assesses the student's progress of learning through the standards.

3-12 Letter Grades

At this time, traditional letter grades are still necessary for summary reporting of achievement relative to learning standards at intermediate, middle, and high school levels. External expectations, including those pertaining to athletic eligibility and college admissions, necessitate this more traditional reporting practice for now.

Final Letter Grade Definitions for Grades 6-12

Intermediate, Middle, & High School Academic Performance Key

A	100 – 90
B	89 – 80
C	79 – 70
D	69 – 60
F	59 or Below

Guideline #2: Grades will be determined primarily on summative assessments/tasks (at eighty percent (80%))

1. There is an important distinction between *formative* and *summative* assessments.
 - a. **Formative assessments** are measures of progress *while a student is still in the process of learning*. It provides the teacher and student with information necessary to guide further instruction in order to maximize learning. Formative assessment provides a status check of where students are in relationship to mastery of the learning standard. These formative measures are characterized as assessment **for** learning rather than assessment **of** learning. Some examples of formative assessments include (but are not limited to):
 - i. homework
 - ii. daily check quizzes
 - iii. checklists
 - iv. "bell work"
 - v. "exit slips"
 - b. **Summative assessments** occur *after sufficient instruction, practice, and individualized support has occurred*. As the **final** measure of achievement for a period of instruction, it is assessment **of** learning. Examples of summative assessments include (but are not limited to):
 - i. tests
 - ii. end of chapter/unit or a weekly quiz
 - iii. projects / tasks that demonstrate application of a learned skill
 - iv. research papers / literary reviews (final drafts only)
2. Because only summative assessments are true measures of the ultimate attainment of the learning standards, they must comprise nearly all (making up eighty percent (80%)) of a student's quarter/semester/course grade.
3. Formative assessments are "low-stakes" or "no-stakes" tasks. As such, if they are scored and factored into the grade at all, they are included in the twenty percent (20%) portion of the grade. These are practice opportunities to assess current understanding and determining what needs further reviewing.
4. Homework is typically used for student practice and/or formative assessment. As such, if scored, it factors into the twenty percent (20%) portion of the overall grade. Homework should only be counted if it is graded – **not simply for completion, but for understanding**.
5. To facilitate learning, students are often put into collaborative groups for instructional activities. Group scores on work/projects are not included in the eighty percent (80%) portion of a student's grade. Only measures of individual achievement of learning standards are included in the summative grading section. The student's individual contributions to the group assignment, if able to be determined, not a grade for the group as a whole, could be graded and included in the 20% formative area of the grades.

Guideline #3: To ensure that a grade truly reflects mastery of Ohio Content Standards, flexible deadlines and/or reassessment are necessary. It is still the student's responsibility to complete all assigned tasks to the best of their ability in a timely manner.

1. Punctuality, time management, and personal responsibility are traits/skills which are necessary for student success beyond school, and thus need to be supported through schooling. They are not, however, directly contained within Ohio Content Standards and thus **should not be directly factored** into a student's grade. This has important implications:

Reasonable accommodations to accept late work without grade penalty must be made. Late submission of work may carry some other consequences, but if lateness itself was to result in a change in the grade given to the assignment, the grade would no longer represent the student's level of mastery of the learning standard (which, again, is the sole defined purpose of our grading). While all teachers are expected to provide opportunities for students to submit late work without grade penalty, the specific guidelines (e.g., timelines) adopted by an individual teacher are a product of that teacher's professional judgment. Work will only be submitted up until the end of the grading quarter, unless the teacher decides to allow work beyond that deadline. What is expected of all teachers with regard to their particular guidelines is that those guidelines are clearly communicated to all students at the outset of the year/course.

2. The purpose of a grade is to determine **whether or not** a student mastered content, not **when** he or she mastered it. This means that it should be common practice for students to be given multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery of learning standards. The most recent evidence of mastery is what should factor into the student's summary grade.

Opportunities for re-takes on tests for the demonstration of **proficiency** are provided for students. These, however, may be offered only after the student has exhibited effort and responsibility for obtaining the knowledge/skill that he or she failed to demonstrate on the initial assessment. For example, students may be required to "earn" the opportunity to re-test outside of regular class time by attending extra tutoring sessions or by completing a supplementary assignment.

Guideline #4: Behaviors/conduct will be reported separately and not factored in the determination of a student's grade.

1. While behavior, attitude, effort, cooperation, and participation are all factors that influence the success of a child, they are reported separately and not factored into academic grades. This goes back to the purpose of grading: to demonstrate student skill/knowledge based on the Ohio Content Standards. An academic grade will not be influenced--**either positively or negatively**--by the consideration of behavior/conduct apart from what the student demonstrates he or she knows or can do academically.
2. Grades are never to be used in a punitive manner. Using grades in an attempt to change or modify behavior is a violation of the purpose of grading.