

Grading Guidance @CHECDC
a guide to promoting consistency and equity in our grading practices

Introduction

Many teaching and learning challenges contribute to inconsistent grading philosophies and practices across teachers, courses, grade levels, buildings, and districts.

The purpose of norming our grading practices is to positively promote learning by addressing the inconsistencies and inequities found in our gradebooks. Three essential questions should be asked and reflected upon when creating, implementing, and promoting grading practices:

1. What are the possible impacts of a failing grade on a student?
2. What equity challenges exist in a grading system?
3. How can we establish grading policies and practices that promote learning for all students?

Now is our time to be audacious in how we approach teaching, learning, and grading. We must move forward with empathetic and trusting partnerships. How will our students remember their learning experiences? Will students want to continue to be lifelong learners and leaders in the quest for social justice? Or, will students seek to bail on a system that clearly isn't moving forward with them in mind?

DCPS Grading System: What it can Look Like

Assessment 40% of grade	Practice and Application 50% of grade	Participation and Engagement 10% of grade
<p>e.g. GRASPSs, portfolio presentations, RCTs, MasteryConnect assessments, Achievement Network (ANET) interim assessments, iReady adaptive growth assessments, NWEA adaptive growth assessments, Summit Learning projects, Summit Learning focus areas, AP practice tests, SAT preparation tests, Clever assessment platforms, unit assessments, dynamic assessment</p>	<p>e.g. Openers, SEL activities, classwork, homework, independent reading, Desmos products, Canvas uploads, Teams uploads, synchronous work products, asynchronous work products, Kahoot! responses, NearPod responses, OneNote contents, NewsELA, Clever assignment platforms, handouts, PowerPoints, Summit Learning checkpoints, textbooks, workbooks</p>	<p>e.g. positive contributions to the classroom community, teamwork, leadership, share outs, Do Nows, Exit Tickets, relationship building, asynchronous participation, verbal participation, written participation, Teams chat participation, alternative platform participation, Canvas log ins, Teams message board participation, text messages, phone calls, Teams calls, emails, social media engagement, one-on-one support sessions</p>
<p>0 ≤ A ≤ 1 per day 0 ≤ A ≤ 1 per week 1 ≤ A ≤ 2 by progress report 4 per advisory</p> <p>No more than 4 per advisory and w/ unlimited revisions and additional credit opportunities</p>	<p>0 ≤ PA ≤ 1 per day 0 ≤ PA ≤ 1 per week 2 ≤ PA ≤ 5 by progress report 4 ≤ PA ≤ 10 per advisory</p> <p>No more than 10 per advisory and w/ unlimited revisions and additional credit opportunities</p>	<p>0 ≤ P ≤ 1 per day 0 ≤ P ≤ 1 per week 2 ≤ P ≤ 5 by progress report 4 ≤ P ≤ 10 per advisory</p> <p>No more than 10 per advisory and w/ unlimited extra credit opportunities</p>
<p>12 ≤ Marked Grades/Assignments in ASPEN per Advisory ≤ 24</p>		

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Official DCPS Documents to Support Equitable Grading Practices

[Introducing Waiting for Submission \(WS\) Code](#)

[Introducing Waiting for Submission \(WS\) Code Presentation](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions about Engagement](#)

Best Practices

- Enter “F” (63%) as the lowest possible score/mark for submitted work ([DCPS Policy](#))
- Enter “WS” (“Waiting for Submission,” 50%) for unsubmitted work ([DCPS Policy](#))
- Provide extended time on all graded assignments
- [Subscribe to competency-based grading standards](#)
- Provide unlimited opportunities for revisions on all graded assignments
- Remove original assignments’ scores/marks if revisions’ scores/marks are higher
- Dynamically assess failing students and use the results as valid grades/marks
- Provide time and space for weekly gradebook reviews with students
- Assign and grade fewer assignments
- Value assignments as competency-based marks, not completion tasks
- Create alternative assignments to reach students and measure competencies
- Delay entering numerical grades in ASPEN until the end of each week
- [Enable total points view \(per category\) in ASPEN](#) for easier user tabulation
- Provide student choice in what gets marked/graded
- Drop low scores and only utilize grades that truly reflect students’ mastery or proficiencies
- Recognize any and all traditional and alternative methods of participation and engagement
- Provide discretionary extra credit opportunities and marks for students seeking extension
- Embrace non-traditional, alternative communication as engagement
- Ensure students and parents regularly review gradebooks
- Provide DIY user video tutorials for students and parents on how to access and read gradebooks
- Include SEL openers and/or non-academic questions to provide low-risk participation access

Frequent Biases, Mindsets, Statements, Arguments, and Questions to Consider

If we provide extended time on all assignments, then we will not be promoting appropriate time management skills.

We are teaching and learning in a global pandemic with many social, emotional, environmental, economic, and health challenges. Submitting any work products or assignments is a positive action and should be recognized. Anything students complete or accomplish within advisories should be recognized with full credit. Extended time is an **actual accommodation** for our students with IEPs and EL status— an accommodation that can also be used for students who are struggling to showcase mastery or competencies in short time frames. Remember, not every student is able to fully engage during our daily prescribed schedules because of his own life’s priorities. Don’t take it personally.

If we provide unlimited revisions on assignments, then we will devalue original attempts.

We are teaching and learning in a global pandemic with many social, emotional, environmental, economic, and health challenges. Encouraging students to review, reflect, and revise their work is a positive opportunity for students to own their own learning and for teachers to enhance the learning process. The opportunity to improve work, fix mistakes, and grow aligns with our own experiences as adults and something our students will experience in higher education and the workforce themselves.

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Competency-Based grading is difficult to roll out well.

We are teaching and learning in a global pandemic with many social, emotional, environmental, economic, and health challenges. Now is a chance to be audacious in how we develop and implement curriculum. If students are frustrated and not completing assigned work, it's time for us to critically examine our curriculum and determine if we are truly providing a [viable, coherent, and flexible course of study that accommodates all learners](#). If all stakeholders are struggling to progress within our current model, then why not try something disruptively new? Now is the time to take risks and ditch our pre-Covid ways of teaching and learning.

Inputting “WP” (50%) for unsubmitted work or “F” (63%) as the lowest score for poor performance is an unfair reflection of a student’s actual performance or ability—it’s doctoring a gradebook and unfair to students who are doing everything we ask.

We are teaching and learning in a global pandemic with many social, emotional, environmental, economic, and health challenges. Every student has worth, especially during a global pandemic that is exacerbating inequities, stressors, and traumas. We don't know every student's story and we cannot make assumptions about her availability or virtual learning competencies. Inputting 50% for incomplete/missing assignments still represents failing grades and limited-to-no engagement. However, mathematically, it is aligned with the rest of our scoring system: 10% bands. It would seem unreasonable to recognize the large 64% gap at the other end of the spectrum: 0-10% is F, 11-20% is D, 21-30% is C, 31-35% is B, and 36-100% is A. Why accept the gap at all? Additionally, district employees can't receive lower than “1” on IMPACT. Should “0s” be in play?

These aren't enough grades in ASPEN to accurately mark students. Just a few grades per week marked in ASPEN aren't enough to motivate, track, and reward students.

We are teaching and learning in a global pandemic with many social, emotional, environmental, economic, and health challenges. Grading with traditional marks is only one way to assess and measure student performance and success. Not everything needs to be graded and marked. We can still assess and measure content mastery and growth without inputting marks in the gradebook. Prioritize what gets marked—this prioritization will encourage us to be thoughtful in how we proceed through curriculum. You can always provide extra credit if adding more marks is important to you and your students.

What about students who want to do more? What about students who are doing everything we ask and then some? How can this limited gradebook support and celebrate these students?

We are teaching and learning in a global pandemic with many social, emotional, environmental, economic, and health challenges. Along with these challenges, however, comes many opportunities. There are many students who are thriving. Instead of creating more assignments to keep excelling students “busy,” differentiate current assignments to be even more rigorous. This differentiation will provide opportunities to build critical thinking and communication skills within individual students beyond current grade level expectations. Rather than complete “extra” work, challenge them at their levels.

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Some students still need daily grades and marks in ASPEN to feel successful and organized. We need more assignments to satisfy this need.

We are teaching and learning in a global pandemic with many social, emotional, environmental, economic, and health challenges. We have the agency to be audacious, flexible, and generous in our credit opportunities. If students are showing up to class, completing tasks with fidelity, and engaging in extension opportunities, unlimited extra credit can be given at the discretion of the teacher(s) in the assessment and practice and application categories. Be creative. Be generous. Celebrate and reward students who are thriving with greater rigor and additional credit opportunities. Additionally, we must be consistent and urgent in our marking. We must prioritize organization and timely updates to our gradebooks to ensure effective grade monitoring. Waiting to upload/dump grades into ASPEN just prior to progress reports or grading periods does a disservice to students and families. ***Are our gradebooks organized, clean, informative, and accessible?***

Students just want to pass. Providing easier access to passing grades limits the lessons learned through failure and the consequence of not doing anything.

We are teaching and learning in a global pandemic with many social, emotional, environmental, economic, and health challenges. Failing or passing on the F/D margins is a gray area even during normal times and has normalized “passing” as a success for some students. We must normalize that Ds are not satisfactory—they represent not meeting expectations on tasks and standards despite some attendance and/or engagement. Ds should never (and they actively do not in the outside world) communicate satisfactory academic success or achievement. We can pass students and still communicate that Ds are measures of poor-to-unacceptable performance. Normalize that Ds are not meeting expectations. Don’t let, “I passed!” be a commonly celebrated narrative (but know that in some extenuating circumstances, it can be a wonderful achievement).

Students can fail. They will have other opportunities to make up the credit later.

We are teaching and learning in a global pandemic with many social, emotional, environmental, economic, and health challenges. One of the greatest challenges pre-covid and now is how to schedule students in credit recovery courses and/or summer school. Simply put, this is an impossible task—there simply are not enough sections to accommodate our failing students. Students can only be enrolled in one credit recovery course at a time. Additionally, summer school at the secondary level is erratically available and insufficient to meet the needs of our learners—both in time and space. There simply is no time to “catch up.” There literally are not enough structures and systems in place to support our failing students and provide them with the credits they need to graduate. Fs are terribly destructive. Our students do not have multiple chances to earn credit.

It seems we simply don’t want to fail any students at all. Why? Students must learn to do things.

We are teaching and learning in a global pandemic with many social, emotional, environmental, economic, and health challenges. Failing grades have lasting academic, social, career, and life consequences that our students cannot afford to take on during these unprecedented times. Providing failing marks for students during distance learning will increase the chances of students not returning to CHEC whenever the pandemic passes. [Students who drop out are five times more likely to have been retained or failed a class than those who graduate.](#) Failing a student doesn’t “send a message” of needing to work harder. Failing a student signals that despite any attendance and effort during a global pandemic/public health crisis, he’s not good enough for school.

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Attendance

Attendance will prove even more important now that students are back in the school building. We need to reacquaint ourselves on how we view and understand attendance.

Questions to consider:

1. How can we attract, engage, and retain students?
2. Can our assignments be completed if students did not attend live classes?
3. If assignments cannot be completed without live participation, then what structures can be put in place to provide access to the material/content needed to succeed?
4. Do our “chronically absent” students at least communicate regularly? Sometimes? What periods? How can we involve these students when they do log on or check in?

Attendance and Truancy Policy: School Year 2021-22

H. Attendance, Grading, and Promotion

Student grading and promotion can be impacted by an accrual of unexcused absences as follows:

- Secondary students with ten (10) unexcused absences in any class shall receive an initial written notice that they are at risk of receiving a grade of “FA” (failure due to absences) in that subject upon accumulating more than thirty (30) unexcused absences unless an exception applies.³⁶
- Secondary students with fifteen (15) unexcused absences in any class shall receive an additional written warning that they are at risk of receiving a grade of “FA” (failure due to absences) in that subject upon accumulating more than thirty (30) unexcused absences.³⁷
- Secondary students accumulating more than thirty (30) unexcused absences in a course within a full school year shall receive a failing final grade in that course with a resulting loss of course credit.³⁸
- Students accumulating more than thirty (30) unexcused absences within a school year shall only be promoted if a written justification is submitted by the principal to the Chancellor,³⁹ or the student attends summer school and is reevaluated for promotion.⁴⁰

Estimating What Attendance “Looks Like” Each Advisory

F/FA	D	C	B	A
30 or more unexcused absences AND 0%/no asynchronous engagement	Present/Live some days (<30 unexcused absences) OR limited asynchronous engagement	Present/Live many days OR asynchronous engagement	Present/Live most every day OR satisfactory asynchronous engagement	Present/Live most every day OR exemplar asynchronous engagement

Flow Chart/Table for Teacher Action
actions, questions, and people to consider when marking grades

Stakeholder	F/FA	D	C	B	A
Student	Define the grade: “I did not attend classes in the building; I did not work independently; I did not participate in the learning process.”	Define the grade: “I did not meet expectations on learning tasks and standards.”	Define the grade: “I approached expectations on learning tasks and standards.”	Define the grade: “I met expectations on learning tasks and standards.”	Define the grade: “I exceeded expectations on learning tasks and standards.”
Teacher	What are the special needs of this learner? Does this learner have an IEP? 504? EL status? Have I provided the prescribed accommodations to support success? Are other teachers struggling with this student’s attendance?	What are the special needs of this learner? Does this learner have an IEP? 504? EL status? Have I provided the prescribed accommodations to support success? Are other teachers struggling with this student’s performance?	What learning plans and/or strategies can I implement to push the average learner to realize greater success? Have I talked about these students with other teachers? What strategies are other teachers using to elevate average performance?	Why is this student meeting my expectations? How can I identify and leverage this student’s learning and work habits to benefit all students?	Why is this student excelling? How can I identify and leverage this student’s learning and work habits to benefit all students?
Administrator	Notify the SLC administrator of failing students at progress report time and seek support in creating intervention plans in Panorama .	Notify the SLC administrator of borderline failing students at progress report time and seek support in collaborating with shared teachers.	Motivate the student with a shout out each week in SLC or submit her name to the Dean Team for student of the week recognition.	Celebrate the student with a shout out each week in SLC or submit her name to the Dean Team for student of the week recognition.	Celebrate the student with a shout out each week in SLC or submit her name to the Dean Team for student of the week recognition.
Family	Attempt to notify the family of the student’s failing status by calling home and discussing a plan for success at least one per week. Document attempts.	Motivate the student with a positive and action-oriented text/call home at least once per week.	Motivate the student with a positive and action-oriented text/call home at least once per advisory.	Recognize the student with a positive text/call home at least once per advisory.	Recognize the student with a positive text/call home at least once per advisory.

Supplemental Reading: [Failing Grades: We Have a Huge Problem](#) • [We Need a New Pedagogy](#) • [School Wasn’t So Great Before Covid Either](#) • [What is Good Teaching?](#) • [Parents Want Better Distance Learning](#) • [50% for Work Not Turned In](#) • [Grading During the Pandemic: A Conversation](#) • [Covid-19 and Learning Loss](#)