

Denton Independent School District

*Grades
6-12*

**Grading and
Assessment
Procedures and
Guidelines**

**2014
-
2015**

*Denton ISD: Empowering lifelong learners to be engaged citizens
who positively impact their local and global community.*



Denton Independent School District

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Grading and Assessment Guidelines



Section One: Introduction

For the past two years, the secondary Academic Leadership Team (ALT) and the Secondary Curriculum, Instruction, and Staff Development Department have examined grading practices in an effort to make sure our practices support our beliefs about learning, assessment, and grading. This process has included professional learning, research, book studies, national educational specialists, action research, and input from teachers, administrators, and parents.

At the heart of this work were two underlying questions. **Do our grades accurately reflect student learning? Do our grading practices build confidence in our students' belief that they can learn?**

This document is intended to define the philosophy, purpose, and procedures behind the changes in secondary grading practices adopted by Denton ISD for the **core content areas** (English, math, science, social studies, and world languages). Some previous procedures and guidelines have been expanded, some clarified, and others changed or eliminated altogether. As you read this document, focus on the common understanding that grades should only convey what a student knows and is able to do as related to the academic standards. Grades are for the purpose of providing students and parents meaningful feedback on student learning, documenting academic progress, and informing instructional decisions to support student achievement.

High schools and middle schools will begin implementation of all grading practices and guidelines starting with the 2014-2015 school year. Standards referenced grades and assessments will be phased in throughout the year with an expectation of full implementation in 2015.

Section Two: Beliefs and Practices Statements

As secondary educators in Denton ISD, we are committed to grading practices that support the learning process, encourage student success, and accurately reflect student progress toward mastery of the state standards, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Our beliefs about learning and grading practices are grounded in the following statements.

- All students can learn.
- Students learn in different ways.
- Students learn in different time frames.
- Errors are inherent in the learning process.
- Assessment is a process for providing feedback that influences learning.
- Grades should accurately reflect mastery of the standards (TEKS or AP/IB course standards).

As evidence of our commitment to these beliefs, the following grading and assessment practices will be implemented beginning in the 2014-15 academic year.

- All assignments and assessments will be referenced to the standards.
- All student grades will be reflective of their learning.
- Expectations for student learning will not be compromised for failure to meet deadlines. If a student misses a deadline, the student will be expected to master the content.
- Students will be expected to complete all assignments on time and in their entirety. A zero will be recorded in the teacher gradebook only when a student has not demonstrated mastery of the content.
- All students will be given the opportunity for reassessment of all summative assessments, excluding semester exams.

Section Three: Standard-Referenced Grades and Assessments

Because we believe assessment is a process for providing feedback that influences learning and that grades should reflect mastery of the standards, Denton ISD will support accuracy in grading through standards referencing assignments and assessments.

- Grades will be determined on achievements of course standards.
 - Texas Education Code, 28.0216 (1) A district grading policy must require a classroom teacher to assign a grade that reflects the student's relative mastery of an assignment. Texas code requires that granting course credit be based on academic achievement and demonstrated proficiency of the standards.
 - In a standards-referenced system, a student's status is reported (or referenced) relative to the standard for each area of knowledge and skill on the report card. (Marzano, p. 18-19)
 - "...the primary purpose of grades is to communicate a summary of student achievement... as a result of their learning." (O'Connor, p. 106)
- Denton ISD will enact a grading procedure that requires secondary classroom teachers to assign grades that reflect students' mastery of the TEKS or AP/IB course standards. This procedure is designed to communicate accurate information to parents and students regarding progress towards mastery.
 - It is "essential that all teachers in every school teaching the same grade or same subject/course should determine grades in similar ways." (O'Connor, p. 5)
 - It is important to ensure that student grades are accurate and that what teachers report is clear and meaningful. (Schimmer, p. 123)

Section Four: Summative and Formative Assessments

Because we believe errors are inherent in the learning process, all grades will be calculated using summative assessments only.

Summative Assessment is the process of evaluating and grading the learning of the student at the end of a unit or instructional period. Before a summative grade is assigned, the teacher is to have adequately taught the concept, and the student is to have had a sufficient opportunity to master the concept being evaluated. Summative assessment is generally used as part of the grading process.

Definition of Summative Assessment: Assessments designed to provide information to be used in making judgments about student's achievement at the end of a sequence of instruction. (Assessment OF learning) (adapted from O'Connor, 2011, p. 107)

Examples of Summative Assessments: final drafts/attempts, quizzes, tests, exams, projects, performances, common assessments, essays, presentations, portfolios.

Formative assessments are instructional activities designed to allow students to develop content knowledge and/or practice content skills with teacher feedback that is accurate, helpful and timely. Formative assessment is done while students are still learning. Grades should be a reflection of the mastery of the standards, so it would not be appropriate to use formative assessments for grading since students are in the learning process.

Definition of Formative Assessment: Assessments designed to provide direction for improvement and/or adjustment of teaching and learning activities for individual students or for a whole class. (Assessments FOR learning) (adapted from O'Connor, 2011, p. 107)

Examples of Formative Assessments: teacher observation, class discussions, lesson practice, practice homework, instructional questions, initial drafts/attempts, progress checks, checks for understanding, independent practice, daily work.

The key is to think of summative assessment as the game/performance and formative assessment as the practice/rehearsal.

Section Five: Grading Practices

Grading Practice: All assignments and assessments will be referenced to the standards.

As students and parents view the grade postings in the on-line Home Access Center (HAC), each posting will be followed by the course standard code. This clearly connects the work to the standard it is addressing.

Examples:

- ELA – Romeo and Juliet – Make and defend inferences **TEKS: 9(C)**

- Math – WS4-1 #2-20 evens (uses completing the square) **TEKS: 5(E)**
- Science – Drift Worms Lab **TEKS: B.7(F)**
- Social Studies – Columbian Exchange **AP: 1.2 I (C)**
- World Languages – Paraphrase **TEKS: 2(C)**

Grading Practice: All student grades will be reflective of their learning.

Since all grades will reflect mastery of student learning, grades will not be inflated or deflated for student non-academic behaviors. Non-academic behaviors include but are not limited to: attendance, attitude, bringing supplies/materials to class, incorrect headings, lack of neatness on an assignment, returning progress reports, etc. Even though these behaviors are important, they are not a part of our academic standards and will not be a part of the student grade since grades reflect mastery of the standards. Reporting these nonacademic types of behaviors is important, and they will be communicated in a form other than the student’s grades.

Grading Practice: Expectations for student learning will not be compromised for failure to meet deadlines. If a student misses a deadline, the student will still be expected to master the content.

Meeting deadlines and turning in an assignment on time is a critical behavior contributing to a student’s sense of responsibility, but it does not represent a student’s mastery of the standards. The goal is to accurately report grades representing what a student knows, what a student understands, and what a student can do. Teachers will ask for parent support and guidance if a student develops chronic late work behavior. Students are expected to meet all deadlines, and each secondary campus will determine the appropriate consequences for their students who do not turn their work in on time or fail to turn work in at all. Those consequences will be clearly communicated to parents and students.

Grading Practice: Students will be expected to complete all assignments on time and in their entirety. A zero will be recorded in the teacher gradebook only when a student has not demonstrated mastery of the content.

The use of zeros to indicate missing work allows students to “opt out” of required and essential work. The expectation is for students to complete and receive credit for all essential work in an effort to demonstrate mastery of the standards. In order to give parents accurate information, zeroes are only used to indicate that there was no mastery of the standards. If work is missing or incomplete, students will be expected to complete the work so that there will be enough evidence to communicate mastery of the standards. Using a zero in this case would give an inaccurate portrayal of the child’s knowledge.

Grading Practice: All students will be given the opportunity for reassessment of all summative assessments, excluding semester exams.

Because we believe that errors are inherent in the learning process, all students will be given the opportunity for reassessment of all summative assessments, excluding semester exams. It is only by reporting the most current of assessment results that a grade accurately reflects student mastery.

Example:

If the first score is 40 and the second score is 80, an accurate report of student mastery would be 80, not 60. Students will not be penalized for errors on the first assessment, which a mean averaging of the grades does.

The opportunity for reassessment encourages students to deepen their learning on different standards, and the reassessment itself allows demonstration of the increased knowledge. If it takes a student longer to learn a standard, and the assessment comes before the student has completed the learning, there is no reason for further learning if there is no chance for reassessment. With reassessment opportunities, students actually work harder because they have taken advantage of additional learning opportunities, such as group tutorials, alternative assignments, and individual conversations with teachers. It is by participating in these additional opportunities, students earn the privilege of reassessing. An exception is made for semester exams because, by design, they are already reassessments of all the work done during the semester.

The practice of allowing students to reassess is consistent with other important assessments such as the SAT, ACT, and even a driver's license. In all of these situations, the number of times one takes the test is inconsequential. In fact, the highest score is the only score that is kept on the final record. Each secondary campus will develop reassessment guidelines so that students will know exactly how to qualify for a reassessment opportunity.

Section Six: Grading Categories

Course	Major Summative	Minor Summative
Regular	70%	30%
Pre-AP/AP/IB	80%	20%

Major Summative Examples (examples only, not an exhaustive list)	Minor Summative Examples (examples only, not an exhaustive list)
Unit tests Projects Research papers Final drafts Essays Presentations Common assessments Lab practical Written response Performance tasks Portfolios	Quizzes Graphic organizers Rough Drafts Short pieces of writing Oral questions in class Exit tickets Learning Logs Journal entries Performance tasks Laboratory write-ups

- One grade cannot count more than 1/3 of the final grade for the grading period.
- The end of the grading period grade should reflect an adequate sampling of summative assessments to accurately reflect mastery of the targeted standards.
- Progress reporting periods should include both minor and major summative grades.
- To determine the grade at the end of the grading period, teachers will use professional judgment when considering the body of evidence from minor and major summative grades. The most recent achievement data should be considered when assessing mastery of the standards.
- Teachers will record the actual grade earned as there is no minimum grade to be assigned.
- Final semester grade calculations: The average of the two grading periods will count 80% of the final semester grade, and the final exam will count 20% of the final semester grade. Each semester exam will assess all the standards covered throughout that semester.

Section Seven: Grade Book Codes

The following codes will be used to better communicate to parents and students entries in the grade book when viewed on-line through the Home Access Center:

EXC = excused as nonessential because other evidence is sufficient to determine mastery; does not calculate into the grade

MSG = work not turned in at all; calculates temporarily as a grade of zero in the ongoing grade period calculation until completed.

H = History of grades; hover over the H and all the grades entered will appear; this will signal that a grade has been replaced due to a resubmit or reassess.

Zeros = only used to indicate no mastery of the standards

TEKS Code = references the course standard aligned to the assignment or assessment

INC = insufficient evidence to give a grade; used at the end of the grading period only; must be removed within a specified time. Incompletes create UIL ineligibility.

Section Eight: Homework

At its best, homework in reasonable amounts can support and enhance learning, provide feedback to teachers about learning, allow students to practice skills and deepen their knowledge, and instill confidence within students when they successfully complete tasks on their own.

- Cathy Vatterott, *Rethinking Homework*

The purpose of each homework task should be identified and clearly articulated to the student. Homework is best used as a means for students to reinforce and apply what they have learned in class. When this practice leads to a greater understanding of the learning targets and successful application of concepts taught in class, students are more likely to see the value in homework and its impact on increasing their learning. Providing students with feedback from their homework tasks is a critical part of the learning process

- Preparation Homework helps students prepare for upcoming learning.
- Practice Homework provides student with needed review and reinforcement of learning targets with which the student is already familiar.

Preparation and practice homework are examples of formative assessment. Formative assessments help check for understanding throughout the learning process and are not graded because errors are inherent during the learning process.

Work that requires time outside of class and fits into minor or major summative assessment categories may be graded.

Section Nine: References

O'Connor, K. (2011). *A Repair Kit for Grading: 15 Fixes for Broken Grades*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Marzano, R. (2009). *Formative Assessment and Standards-Based Grading*. Centennial, CO: Marzano Research Labs.

Schimmer, T. (2014). *Ten Things That Matter From Assessment To Grading*. Boston, MA: Pearson Assessment Training Institute.

Vatterott, C. (2009). *Rethinking Homework: Best practices that support diverse needs*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).