

**ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES – Students  
542IA – Grading Policy: Secondary**

**Wauwatosa School District  
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## PURPOSE of GRADING

The central purpose of grading is to communicate clearly and consistently the level of student mastery of grade level or content area benchmarks to students and their parents.

The central purpose of this document, “Grading Policy Guidelines,” is to provide guidelines promoting common understandings of practices and procedures to assess and evaluate student achievement in the Wauwatosa School District.

## ASSESSMENTS

Students’ grades are determined by their level of mastery of grade level or content area benchmarks.

Benchmarks:

- represent essential skills and concepts,
- are developed by grade level or content area teams of teachers,
- and are informed by state and national standards.

Grade level and content area benchmarks can be found on the district website.

Each benchmark taught in a course is assessed throughout a grading term (a semester or trimester). Teachers ensure that their students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery of each benchmark. These multiple opportunities can take place through a variety of assessments: tests, projects, essays, presentations, etc.

While students often work together collaboratively, their grades reflect *only* their individual achievement in relation to their mastery of benchmarks. Therefore, “group grades” are not an acceptable practice.

## FORMATIVE and SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

Teachers collect and record both formative and summative assessments in the PowerSchool gradebook for students and parents to see. While formative assessments do not calculate directly into a student’s grade, they are absolutely essential for student learning. They give students practice and meaningful feedback on their progress toward benchmark mastery, and they prepare students for summative assessments. These are some typical differences between formative and summative assessments.

Formative Assessments	Summative Assessments
are considered practice	are final products or performances and are thus eligible for retakes
occur fairly frequently	occur less frequently than formative assessments
are “smaller” in scope, covering fewer benchmarks	are “bigger” in scope, covering a number of benchmarks
do not directly count for a student’s grade	determine a student’s grade

## COMMON SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

Each common course must have a minimum of three common summative assessments per semester. A common course is any course that has multiple sections taught by more than one teacher. Virtually all courses in the district are considered common courses because they are taught in more than one school by more than one teacher. For example, if a course is taught at West High School and at East High School, it is a common course, and the students in both sections would take common summative assessments created by the two teachers. Common summative assessments ensure equity and coherence for students.

- *Common* means that students in all sections of the course will take the same assessment, and it means that the assessment was written by the group of teachers who teach the course.
- *Summative* means the assessment is a final product or performance and will count toward a student's grade.

## EVALUATION

Assessments – both formative and summative – communicate student mastery of benchmarks. To be academically successful, students need to understand exactly how their benchmark mastery is being assessed. Rubrics help with student understanding in this area by clarifying expectations of benchmark mastery. Below are the descriptors for the four levels of benchmark mastery. This set of descriptors informs the four-point rubrics that teachers create – usually collaboratively – for their courses.



**4 (A)** Students consistently demonstrate **thorough mastery** of grade level or course benchmarks in new or extended contexts.

**3 (B)** Students consistently demonstrate **adequate mastery** of grade level or course benchmarks in familiar contexts.

**2 (C)** Students demonstrate **partial mastery** of grade level or course benchmarks in familiar contexts.

**1 (D)** Students inconsistently demonstrate a **partial mastery** of grade level or course benchmarks in familiar contexts.

**INC (Incomplete)** There is insufficient evidence of student work at this time to provide a grade. An unresolved incomplete eventually defaults to zero.

## MISSING EVIDENCE of LEARNING

The scores of 4, 3, 2 and 1 are used for scoring levels of benchmark mastery. However, when a student has not submitted the required evidence of learning, additional symbols may be used.

**Benchmarks grades** are reported using the following symbols:

- 4, 3, 2, 1 and 0
- INC: The work is incomplete.
-  : The work is missing.

**Final grades** are reported using the following symbols:

- A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, F
- I: incomplete
- N: audit [no credit]
- X: medical excuse
- P: pass [credit/no grade]

## RETAKES

### *Formative Assessments*

Allowing students to retake *summative* assessments – or sections of summative assessments – supports the philosophy that students learn in different ways and at different rates. However, students do not retake *formative* assessments, such as quizzes, because this type of assessment is considered practice. Think of this analogy: If a child is practicing free-throws, each free-throw can be considered a formative assessment. If the child misses a free-throw, he or she does not “retake” it; he or she simply continues practicing subsequent free-throws. The same is true in the classroom with formative assessments. If a student is not successful with a given formative assessment, he or she does not retake it. The teacher notes that the student was not successful and reteaches what was being assessed. After the reteaching-relearning process takes place, the teacher offers a subsequent formative assessment, allowing the student to demonstrate mastery of the task at hand.

### *Summative Assessments*

Students may retake summative assessments, such as tests – or sections of the tests – because they are high-leverage demonstrations of essential learning. Teachers have collaboratively agreed that the skills and concepts related to summative assessments are so important, so foundational, that all students must learn them. Failure to learn them hampers further learning.

For a summative assessment to be retaken, a number of conditions must be met.

- A student consults with his or her teacher to determine what teaching and learning are necessary to successfully retake the summative assessment.
  - The teacher’s responsibility is to provide whatever types of feedback and reteaching are necessary for the student to succeed.
  - The student’s responsibility is engage fully in the relearning process by making up missed work, completing additional practice, and reflecting on the learning process
- The teaching and learning must take place during the retake window, typically one week to ten days after the student and teacher have met.

- **All relevant assignments in the unit leading up to the summative assessment must be completed.** If they were not completed before the initial summative assessment, they must be completed during the retake window.
- A student may be required to complete corrections on related previous formative assessments.

## HOMEWORK

Students do homework to practice working on skills and concepts, and this practice supports their mastery of benchmarks. Also, homework allows for valuable feedback from their teachers. Teachers may record homework in the PowerSchool gradebook. **While it is not directly calculated into a student's grade, it will have an indirect effect on students' grades.** When students use homework for practice, they improve their performance on summative assessments.

## CALCULATING a STUDENT'S GRADE

### Calculating Individual Benchmark Scores

#### 1. *Align assessments to benchmarks*

Teachers collaboratively create a summative assessment to evaluate student progress toward the benchmarks taught in a given period of time. In PowerSchool, teachers align the identified benchmarks with the assessment.

#### 2. *Record benchmark scores*

The teacher administers the assessment to students and then scores the assessment, recording students' scores in the PowerSchool gradebook by benchmark. Over time, students take a number of assessments and receive a number of scores for each benchmark.

#### 3. *Calculate individual benchmark scores*

**PowerSchool calculates an individual benchmark score using the three most recent benchmark scores.** By emphasizing the most recent evidence of student learning, we acknowledge that what matters most in the process of learning is whether a student ultimately achieves benchmark mastery. If a teacher adds up and averages all summative grades from a grading term, it can be very difficult for a student to overcome the impact of early failures or very low scores—even though he or she can finally demonstrate complete mastery of learning at the end of a grading term.

Note: Early on in a grading term, if a student has only one benchmark grade, that grade shows up as the individual benchmark score. If the student has two benchmark scores, PowerSchool averages those two scores to obtain an individual benchmarks score. Once a student has three or more benchmark scores, PowerSchool will use the mean of the most recent three as the individual benchmark score.

## Calculating Overall Grades

### **4. Average benchmark scores to get overall grade**

PowerSchool determines a course grade by averaging individual benchmark scores.

Note: At any time a student or parent can look at grades in PowerSchool. This can be very helpful in understanding how a student's learning is progressing. However, to get the most accurate, complete picture of a student's learning, it is valuable to communicate directly with a teacher, getting detailed feedback on the learning process.

## **EXCEPTIONS to GRADING POLICIES**

In special circumstances and on a limited basis, a building administrator has the discretion, in collaboration with a Student Learning designee, a student, and/or his or her teachers and parents, to make an exception to the Grading Policy Guidelines. For example:

- A Level 1 or 2 LEP [Limited English Proficiency Student] may receive an "N" [audit] and/or "P" [pass] in lieu of number or letter grades.
- A Special Education student with an IEP [Individualized Education Program] may have a curriculum modified per his or her program.

## **GRADE POINT AVERAGES [GPAs] and TRANSCRIPTS**

Students will continue to receive letter grades (A, A-, B+, B, B-, etc.) for their courses, as they have in the past. There will be no changes made to the way in which grade point averages [GPAs] are determined. There will be no changes made to the calculation, recording, and maintenance of student transcripts.

## RESPONSIBILITY for LEARNING GRADE

A student's grade in any course reflects his or her academic *performance* in relation to mastery of the benchmarks. **A course grade does not include academic behavior.** These are the characteristics of academic behavior: respect, responsibility, and engagement. While these behaviors are critical to the overall formation of a student, they are not related to academic performance. These behaviors will determine a student's Responsibility for Learning Grade. Each teacher gives his or her students Responsibility for Learning Grades on a regular basis, based on the following rubric. The Responsibility for Learning Grade will appear on a student's report card. While a student's attendance may affect his or her grade, it is not reported by the teacher, but is imported for each class from PowerSchool.

**Respect:** for self, for others—students, staff and community members, for the environment

**Responsibility:** time management, deadlines, homework completion, preparation for class, seeking help when needed

**Engagement:** effort, participation, teamwork/cooperation

<b>Consistently (4)</b>	<b>Usually (3)</b>	<b>Occasionally (2)</b>	<b>Rarely (1)</b>
The student <b>consistently</b> demonstrates the behaviors above.	The student <b>usually</b> demonstrates the behaviors above.	The student <b>occasionally</b> demonstrates the behaviors above.	The student <b>rarely</b> demonstrates the behaviors above.

Note: The Responsibility for Learning Grade may be called a Citizenship Grade in PowerSchool.

## PARADIGM SHIFTS

Certain paradigm shifts – changing fundamental ways of thinking – support the transformation from traditional grading to standards-based grading.

### TRADITIONAL PRACTICE

Tracking grades by assessments [tests, quizzes, etc.]

Grading academic behavior *and* academic performance

Including all quiz/test/etc. grades in a term grade

Primarily relying on math to determine a term grade

Basing grades on percent of material mastered

Maintaining discrete learning units

Focusing on recall/reproduction of content

Administering a cumulative high-stakes final exam at the end of a grading term

### STANDARD-BASED GRADING

Tracking grades by benchmarks

Grading only academic performance

Including only the most recent grades in a term grade

Primarily using standardized grading protocol to determine a term grade, including a teacher's professional discretion

Basing grades on quality of student performance relative to benchmarks

Giving students multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery of benchmarks

Teaching recall/reproduction content in the context of critical thinking skills and essential concepts

Basing a student's course grade on most evidence of most recent learning

## **GLOSSARY**

### **Assessment**

A task a student performs, or a product a student creates, to demonstrate mastery of benchmark learning.

### **Benchmark**

An essential skill or concept, something a student needs to learn to do or understand. Benchmarks are written collaboratively by district teachers for courses and/or grade levels. They are informed by national standards, such as the Common Core State Standards.

### **Common Course**

A course that has multiple sections taught by more than one teacher.

### **Common Summative Assessment**

An assessment written collaboratively for a common course. Common courses have three common summative assessments each semester.

### **Content Area**

An academic discipline, such as English, mathematics, science, art, world languages, etc.

### **Formative Assessment**

An assessment that serves as practice for students, offering feedback on benchmark mastery.

### **Grade Level**

A division used in schools to organize student learning, such as sixth grade, seventh grade, etc.

### **Rubric**

A rubric is a document that communicates expectations of quality regarding a performance or product. Rubrics allow students to understand what is expected of them for an assessment, and they assist teachers in evaluating student performance using leveled criteria. Rubrics support accurate, fair assessment that can be shared by a team of teachers.

### **Summative Assessment**

An assessment that allows students to demonstrate their mastery of benchmarks for a grade.