

Freeport School District
Grading and Reporting Practices
Frequently Asked Questions

- 1) Why does FSD have grading guidelines?
 - To have consistent measurements throughout the district for each student, by each teacher at all grade levels
 - To improve communication of the student's academic progress with parents, students, guidance counselors, other teachers, colleges, future employers, and more
 - The students specifically know what skills have been learned and what skills need to be learned
 - To measure student progress based on researched best practices
 - They were NOT developed to decrease grades nor to increase grades.
 - They were NOT developed to make our schools be more like other schools, colleges, or any other institutions.

- 2) Why is consistency in grading so important?
 - 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.

- 3) 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.

- 4) What is Academic Practice?
 - Whenever a student learns new material there is a time when a student may struggle 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

5) What is Academic Achievement?

- After students have 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

6) 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.
- Academic Practice and Academic Achievement is not distinguished by the type of assessment it is. For example, homework is NOT necessarily Academic Practice, quizzes are NOT necessarily Academic Achievement, etc.

7) 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 20% of the nine-week grade. At the Middle School and Grades 4 and 5, Academic Practice counts for 25% of the nine-week grade.
- It is not fair to weigh Academic Practice more heavily for several reasons:

- On the one hand, a grade for a student's Academic Practice for only correctness, most often the grade will be a lower grade. 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 students heavily on material when they are still in the process of learning it.
 - On the other hand, if a grade of a student's Academic Practice is based on completion, most often will be a high grade. This is because students will be getting grades for merely completing work. The fact that students completed an assignment does not give any information on how well they 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.
- 8) 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 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 (25%) than the high school (20%).
- 9) If Academic Practice is only 20% (HS) or 25% (MS/4/5) of the nine-week grade, why should a student bother with doing it?
- Even at 20%, Academic Practice can greatly affect the final grade.
 - Academic Practice provided by a student allows the teacher to understand the level of understanding and then is able to provide appropriate feedback to the student for improvement.
 - 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 80%. 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 72%.
 - Next, the purpose of Academic Practice work is to give a student experience with new material, evaluate if they are 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. It may also result in a possible "zero" grade if no attempt is made by the student.
- 10) 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 student in any way, but, in fact, is designed to provide the student 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.
- If a student earns a lower grade it will alert parents and appropriate staff to deficiencies in learning. It is necessary to receive 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.
- 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.

11) 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.
- 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.
- Yes, extra credit and bonus points are c.
- 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.

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

- The new grading policy will be implemented for all students at all grade levels.
- When student high school transcripts are sent to colleges, the school attaches the grading policy. Students who have been graded under two different policies will have the two grading practice documents enclosed with their transcripts.

Resources:

Marzano, Robert J. 2000. *Transforming Classroom Grading*, Alexandria, VA: ASCD
 Marzano, Robert J. 2001. *Classroom Instruction That Works*, Alexandria, VA: ASCD
 Reeves, Douglas. 2011. *Elements of Grading*, Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press
 Wiggins, Grant. Website: <http://www.grantwiggins.org/index.lasso>
 Wormeli, Rick. 2006. *Fair Isn't Always Equal: Assessing & Grading in the Differentiated Classroom*, Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers (Chapter 10) and Rick Wormeli Podcasts and Articles – www.Stenhouse.com
 Aurora Public Schools. 2011-2012. Website:
http://www.aps.k12.co.us/family/grading/grading_faq.htm