

D211 POST: INTRODUCTION TO GRADING IMPROVEMENTS



A message from Superintendent Dan Cates ...

(reprinted from the July/August 2017 Superintendent's Newsletter)

Just for a moment, consider what you believe a report card grade should represent. Most of us can likely agree that a grade serves to communicate a student's performance within a given course. Though grading might initially seem uncomplicated and straightforward, opinions differ widely about characteristics that should or should not factor into a final grade. Complexities associated with grading continue to merit extensive interest and study in countless articles, books, and professional seminars.

Input gathered during the community engagement sessions led us to thoroughly review our grading practices. Throughout the last school year, many people worked extensively to identify how we could improve and ensure the meaningfulness, consistency, accuracy, and timeliness of our grades. Each semester, we issue approximately 360,000 final grades, totaling about 720,000 official grades per year. Individual grades for daily homework, quizzes, and tests all factor into these final semester grades, bringing the total number of grades assigned each year easily into the many millions.

We must ensure that students and parents can understand a student's performance through the grades we assign. Earlier this summer, I sent a message encouraging you to watch for upcoming communications about our grading improvements and in this column, I will briefly introduce some of the improvements we will implement in the upcoming school year.

Consistent Grade Reporting System

Recognizing that each student's teachers might use a different reporting system in the electronic gradebook – for example, some use points or percentages while others use letter grades – all teachers in the same school will use the same grade reporting system. This consistency will make it easier for parents and students to read and understand the grade information found in Infinite Campus.

Timing of Grades

Rather than assigning grades every nine weeks, we will now issue an in-progress grade report stating the student's current letter grade status in each course at the 6-week and 12-week points of each semester. We will no longer have the 9-week quarter grades or the 4½-week mid-term progress reports. Eighty percent of the final semester course grade will be based on performance throughout the 18-week semester. As in the past, 20% of the final grade will be based on the semester exam. This semester grading system is similar to the typical collegiate grading system.

Improved Progress Comments

Teachers recently created improved performance comments for the 6- and 12-week in-progress grade reports and semester report cards so the statements are more meaningful to students and parents. The improved progress comments describe academic behaviors as well as communication skills, attitude, work ethic, timeliness, problem solving skills, teamwork, and flexibility demonstrated in the classroom. These "soft skills" are frequently required in employment settings and are helpful habits and skills to practice during high school.

Course Syllabus

Each teacher will provide every student with an informative course syllabus that conveys the expectations and requirements of the course.

We all get better when we work together. To help ensure that every student and parent fully understands the improvements in our grading practices, you will continue to receive information through additional communications leading up to the start of the school year.