

# MINNETONKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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## **POLICY #626: SECONDARY GRADING AND REPORTING PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT**

*(effective with the 2016-17 academic year)*

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### **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to establish effective grading and reporting practices that reflect a student's academic achievement of the course standards for grades 6-12.

### **II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY**

Minnetonka Public Schools' grading and reporting system shall provide students, parents, teachers, and the community with a framework for accurately reporting student achievement. It is the District's responsibility to the community that all school members will work to challenge and support all students in the pursuit of their highest levels of academic and personal achievement. Therefore, the District, in order to stimulate achievement as measured by its extraordinary expectations, will establish a clear and accurate system of grading and reporting academic achievement.

As well, such a system can serve as an open communication link between the school, home, and the community in and outside of Minnetonka. It will provide all parties with awareness of their student's work and an understanding of how the grade reflects their student's achievement. Students and parents will be able to use this data for future course selection and post-secondary plans. In order to provide several formats to receive this vital information, the reporting system will be multi-faceted.

When the student graduates from Minnetonka Schools, the summary of these grades, the academic transcript, will provide a permanent and accurate accounting of the student's achievement. Employers and post-secondary institutions will be able to count on the accuracy of this historic document.

The Minnetonka Public Schools is committed to support a system of guiding principles that will be used to arrive at a clear and accurate grading and reporting policy and procedures. In order to realize these goals, the grading and reporting system must:

- Reflect academic achievement.
- Contain meaningful feedback.
- Be honest, fair, transparent, credible, useful and user friendly.
- Be criterion referenced.
- Align with the Minnetonka Public Schools curriculum.

- Reflect consistency within and among courses, grade levels, departments, and/or schools.
- Communicate information to parties in a clear and timely manner.
- Reflect high expectations of all students across all courses and programs.
- Be developmentally appropriate for all students.

### III. DEFINITIONS

**Accommodation:** a change that does not alter the rigor of the standard. Examples include large print materials, extended testing time, and small group administration.

**Assessments:** multiple tools used to gather information about the student's performance on the standards taught.

**Benchmark:** a clear, specific description of knowledge or skills the student should acquire by a particular point in the student's schooling.

**Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA):** the student's numerical average for all courses taken. It is computed by adding the total number of the letter grades' point values and dividing it by the number of credits completed.

**Curriculum:** a written plan including standards, benchmarks, essential questions, an assessment plan, instructional resources and strategies, and time allocations for emphasis and pacing for the content to be taught.

**Formative Assessments (Academic Practice):** work conducted when a student is still learning the material. It is an assessment that is designed to provide direction for both students and teachers. For the students, the adjustment may mean reviewing, additional practice, or confirmation that they are ready to move forward. For the teachers, it may mean changing instructional strategies, providing additional practice, or being ready to move forward. (e.g. teacher observation, quizzes, homework, rough drafts, peer editing, or notebook checks).

**Grade (to):** the act of evaluating the student's academic work based on a set criteria and the assignment of a grade to it.

**Grade (the):** a number or letter indicating a student's level of achievement relative to the grading scale.

**Grade Weighting:** the assignment of a greater value to the letter grade's numeric point value to reward a student for completing the Advanced Placement (AP) and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) course(s) and taking the national/international AP and IB assessments in the spring.

**Grading Scale:** a description for what each letter grade represents relative to the percentage of the student's mastery of subject goals.

**Grading Syllabus:** a document given to student and parents at the start of each course outlining the grading criteria and procedures for the course.

**Homework:** includes learning tasks, assigned to students by teachers that are meant to be carried out. Students may also complete during non-class hours, most often at home. Homework may be formative or summative in nature depending on the intent of it.

**Instruction:** a teacher-led process, which transforms well-planned curriculum into student learning. Instruction is standards-focused teaching for the purpose of providing meaningful learning experiences that enable all students to master academic content and achieve personal goals.

**Modification:** a substantive change that alters the standard or the rigor of the standard.

**Reporting:** the communicating of a student's achievement to the student and parents and, in turn, this information may be shared with employers and post secondary institutions.

**Standard:** a statement of what the student will be able to know, understand and do.

**Summative Assessments (Academic Achievement):** work conducted when a student has had adequate instruction and practice to be responsible for the material. It is designed to provide information to be used in making judgment about a student's achievement at the end of a sequence of instruction, e.g. final drafts/attempts, tests, exams, assignments, projects, performances.

**Term Grade Point Average (GPA):** the student's numerical average for a given term. It is computed by adding the total number of the letter grades' point values and dividing it by the number of courses for a given term.

#### IV. GRADING PARAMETERS FOR GRADES 6-12

- A. The primary purpose of grading is to communicate the academic achievement status of students to the students, their families, employers, and post-secondary institutions. Additional purposes for grading include:
1. Providing information that the student can use for self-evaluation.
  2. Providing information that teachers can use to modify planning and instruction.
  3. Evaluating the effectiveness of instructional programs.
- B. Teachers of the same course will apply the grading parameters in the same manner.
- C. Course grades will reflect the level of the student's academic achievement. While non-academic factors may be highly valued and often contribute to the student's academic achievement, they should be reported separately from an achievement grade. Relying upon these factors, if merged with achievement evidence, can mask important learning problems and contribute to miscommunication about the student's knowledge. The following are examples of non-academic factors:
1. Behavior (i.e. attendance, attitude, punctuality, certain class participation, effort)

2. Homework based solely on completion
  3. Other evidence of student characteristics or habits
- D. The grade for a course can be calculated solely based on summative assessments or it may be calculated based on a combination of summative and formative assessments. The definitions provided in Part III of this policy are the best guide for determining if an assessment is Academic Practice (formative) or Academic Achievement (summative).
1. The combinations of the Academic Achievement and Academic Practice grades will be based on embedded standards, course rigor, and/or grade level. The following calculations provide a framework for grades 6-12.
    - a. Grade 6  
Academic Practice grades will count for a maximum of 30% of the grade. Academic Achievement grades will count for a minimum of 70%.
    - b. Grades 7 and 8  
Academic Practice grades will count for a maximum of 20% of the grade. Academic Achievement grades will count for a minimum of 80%.
    - c. Grades 9-12  
Academic Practice grades will count for a maximum of 15% of the grade. Academic Achievement grades will count for a minimum of 85%.
  2. Individual departments will determine what assessments are included in the Academic Practice and Academic Achievement categories.
  3. Individual courses will use the same percentages for each category.
- E. The purpose of extra credit is to provide additional academic work in order to enhance the learning of course standards.
1. Extra credit, if used at all, should not exceed 5% of the Academic Practice grade. Every student should have an equal opportunity to earn the credit.
  2. Bonus questions may be offered on an Academic Achievement assessment for additional credit.
- F. As the purpose of grading is to reflect the student's academic achievement, there needs to be a sufficient number of assessments to determine the level of achievement. To accomplish this, effort shall be taken to hold students accountable for completing the work. A zero will be used as the last resort if the student chooses to make no effort to complete an assessment.
- G. Clear criteria will be used to calculate a course grade. The teacher will communicate this in writing to parents and students at the start of the term.

1. In the event that student performance changes significantly, and the teacher does not believe that the calculated grade fairly represents the student's performance, a teacher may include additional assessments (either formative or summative) in order to have a more accurate description of student achievement and record the grade accordingly.
  2. The PASS/FAIL option is for unusual personal circumstances and requires building principal approval. If a student is taking the course PASS/FAIL, the student must have passing work to receive credit for the course. All "Pass-Fail" students in any course will take all tests and turn in all regular class work along with other students. Only the final mark is a "Pass-Fail" mark. A subject taken on a "Pass-Fail" basis will not affect a student's class rank or honor roll standing. If the student passes the class, the student will receive a "P" and full semester credit on his/her report card for that class. If the student fails the class, the student would then receive an "F" (fail) on the report card. A student may have only one PASS/FAIL course per year except in very unusual circumstances as determined by the building principal.
- H. If modifications to rigor and/or standards cause course work to be altered, the assessment and reporting system may reflect modifications.

## V. GRADING SCALE AND SYMBOL DEFINITIONS

In order to calculate grades, the following scale is used to assign grades. In turn, the letter symbols give a description of the student's academic achievement.

92.45-100 = A	
89.45-92.44 = A-	Exemplary work ( <i>90-100% Mastery of Subject Goals</i> )
86.45-89.44 = B+	
82.45-86.44 = B	Proficient/Thorough work ( <i>80-89% Mastery of Subject Goals</i> )
79.45-82.44 = B-	
76.45-79.44 = C+	
72.45-76.44 = C	Acceptable work ( <i>70-79% Mastery of Subject Goals</i> )
69.45-72.44 = C-	
66.45-69.44 = D+	
62.45-66.44 = D	Mediocre work ( <i>60-69% Mastery of Subject Goals</i> )
59.45-62.44 = D-	
00.0-59.44 = F	Unacceptable work ( <i>less than 59% Mastery of Subject Goals</i> )

## VI. GRADE POINT SCALES AND CALCULATIONS

A. Grade Point Average (GPA) is based on grades earned in each of the following grade level groups:

Grades 6-8

- 1) All courses for which the student receives from an A to an F are included in the GPA.
- 2) Only the Term GPA is calculated at the middle schools.

## Grades 9-12

- 1) All courses for which the student receives from an A to an F are included in the GPA.
  - 2) Both a Term GPA and a Cumulative GPA are calculated.
  - 3) An official transcript is maintained for grades 9-12.
  - 4) Pass grades are not included in the GPA calculation, but do count for graduation credit.
- B. The following grade point scales are used to assign point values to each letter grade in order to compute the GPA. The basis for giving additional weighting to some courses shall be the determined rigor of each respective course to be weighted relative to other non-weighted courses in the high school curriculum. International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) courses use different, weighted scales to differentiate between IB/AP and regular courses. All Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses shall be weighted +1.0 if the student earns a C- or higher, the courses have been determined to meet the standards of rigor established by the District, and the student successfully achieves a “3” or higher for Advanced Placement courses or a “4” on an International Baccalaureate assessment. For courses that are beyond the rigor of AP and IB, students must earn a C- or higher in the course and achieve a C- or higher on the end-of-course exam to receive grade-weight status.
- C. Other courses considered for weighting must meet similar standards of academic rigor and have a comparable end-of-course examination as the International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) courses have. If the course is accepted for dual enrollment, the college end-of-course exam will satisfy this requirement.
- D. Annual audits of courses offered within Minnetonka High School and taught by qualified teachers will be conducted by examining the course rigor to determine potential grade weighting. Content must significantly exceed the Minnesota content standards. Any course proposed for weighted status (other than AP and IB courses) must be approved by the School Board, must be taught by a highly qualified instructor, must be of college-level rigor, and must significantly exceed Minnesota content standards. Courses that exceed AP and IB options must have at least one AP or IB course as a prerequisite for enrollment.
- E. Courses offered outside of Minnetonka High School may be considered for grade weighting on a case by case basis. To be considered, a student taking the course outside of Minnetonka High School must submit a syllabus and curriculum materials and provide such other evidence as required in order to make a proper assessment. The criteria for a grade to be weighted are that the course must be of a college level rigor in a core academic subject matter, and content must significantly exceed the Minnesota content standard.

Standard Scale (for all non- AP/IB courses)	IB/AP Weighted Scale (for students successfully completing the course, and taking the AP/IB exam(s))
A= 4.0	A= 5.0
A-= 3.7	A-= 4.7
B+= 3.3	B+= 4.3
B= 3.0	B= 4.0
B-= 2.7	B-= 3.7
C+= 2.3	C+= 3.3
C= 2.0	C= 3.0
C-= 1.7	C-= 2.7
D+=1.3	D+=1.3
D= 1.0	D= 1.0
D-= 0.7	D-= 0.7
F= 0.0	F= 0.0

F. The weighted scales will be used for all grade reporting purposes.

## VII. COMMUNICATION

A shared understanding, between the District staff, students and parents, of the District's grading and reporting system is essential for effective communication. In order for all parties to understand and trust the student achievement data, the District will provide all parties with the following:

- A clear purpose for the grading and reporting system;
- A common grading syllabus for all courses;
- A valid and accurate assessment of the student's achievement;
- Timely reporting;
- A comprehensive and multifaceted reporting system (i.e. conferences, phone calls, curriculum nights, electronic messages, classroom websites, report cards; mid-term reports) and,
- A clear explanation of all symbols used.

## VIII. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development program is necessary to enhance a teacher's ability to deliver high quality instruction and to design and use assessments that are purposeful, assess appropriate learning targets, and to assign grades consistent with this policy. To ensure this goal, the professional development program must be focused on the two themes of assessing accurately and using assessment to benefit students, not merely to grade and sort them. Teachers must understand the relationship between assessments and student motivation and craft assessment experiences to maximize motivation.

Professional development activities must be an integral part of broad school-wide and District-wide educational improvement goals. Effective professional development must be school-based, collaborative, and differentiated in its delivery. District and site professional development plans for effective classroom assessment and grading must include research-based training components of theory, demonstration, guided practice, feedback and coaching.

## **IX. AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY**

The School Board is accountable, in its governance capacity, for the instructional program and delegates responsibilities as follows:

- A. The Superintendent, through designees, shall be responsible for implementation and evaluation of the Grading and Reporting Policy and for development and implementation of procedures and practices for grading and reporting student achievement in Minnetonka schools.
- B. Principals shall be responsible for assuring implementation of the District's beliefs, procedures and practices of effective grading and reporting.
- C. Teachers shall be responsible for effectively implementing classroom assessments and for applying the principles of effective grading and reporting practices.
- D. Parents are a vital link to successful home/school communication about student learning. Therefore, parents are strongly encouraged to participate in all available components of the Minnetonka Schools' grading and reporting system.
- E. Students are responsible for their own learning. All students shall actively participate in understanding the Minnetonka Schools' grading and reporting system. Students are able to use the Academic Practice (formative) grade to identify strengths and weaknesses with a particular topic and, as a result, seek additional help. As well, students are able to know that the Academic Achievement (summative) grade reflects a true level of understanding of a particular topic/unit/course. This information can help the student plan for future course selection and post-secondary options.

### **Legal References:**

Minn. Stat. 123B.02, Subd. 2 (General Powers of School Districts)

Minn. Stat. 123B.09, Subd. 8 (School Board Responsibilities)

### **Cross References:**

Policy #601: District Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Policy #618: Assessment of Student Achievement

Policy #621: Homework

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