



Creating Global Citizens

Grading Policy 2014-2015

Purpose

Up to this point in time, the NSAA has operated with a standards based, uniform grading policy in grades K-5. The standards based reporting system will remain for these grades now using the Common Core State Standards. However, the Middle Grades will be moving to a weighted grading system that will align with the grading policy at AAE. The scores for students in grades 6-8 will be reported as A, B, C, D or F. This policy addresses those issues.

What is the function of grades at the NSAA?

As the NSAA academic achievement and mastery of content knowledge and skills are of highest priority. Grades are the most visible indicator that demonstrates whether students have achieved mastery of the knowledge and skills in any course. The grade provides administrators, counselors and teachers with information regarding student performance. Administrators need to make informed decisions regarding students' progress at the NSAA. This is only possible if we all have the same view of the relative value of a grade. Teachers need to be assured that students are as fully prepared as possible to master the content of their course, based on mastery of prior knowledge and skills.

Philosophy of Mastery Learning

What is Mastery Learning? Although somewhat of a naïve summary, mastery learning is a concept that students must demonstrate they have successfully learned and integrated the skills and concepts necessary to be competent in a specific course of study. The concept has been around for a long time with 80% usually being set as the level that demonstrates mastery in an area. Students must demonstrate mastery before they can continue on to other units of study. A more detailed summary of Master Learning can be found at:

<http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/files/mastlear.html>

Consider the two following scenarios and their impact on subject matter competence:

1. A student passes all assessments, quizzes and tests. However, the student fails to complete a major portion of in-class and homework assignments. Has the student demonstrated subject matter competency? Should the student receive a passing grade?
2. A student completes all in-class and homework assignments with a passing grade. However, the student fails most or all of the quizzes and tests given in class. Has the student demonstrated subject matter competency? Should the student receive a passing grade?

In the first scenario, the student has indeed demonstrated subject matter competence. The student is able to successfully pass assessments of subject matter competence. Should the student receive a passing grade? Yes, the grade is a reflection of mastery, not responsibility.

In the second scenario, the student has not demonstrated subject matter competence. Regardless of the student's diligence in completing homework assignments, the student has not shown mastery of the content of the course. Should the student receive a passing grade? No, the grade is a reflection of mastery, not responsibility.

Issues to Consider

It is difficult to accept that a student who does not complete assignments could receive a passing grade. However, it is a reality. For grades to have any validity, they must be a measure of subject matter competency, not responsibility and diligence. Homework, when appropriate, can and should be an evaluative tool, as well as a method for review.

Does the NSAA discourage homework? No, we recognize that homework will vary from instructor to instructor and from course to course. The instructor of a particular course is the person most capable of determining the amount, appropriateness and type of homework given. All this policy does is establish a weighted limit that homework contributes to the final grade in a course.

Teachers need to collaborate on homework so as not to overtax a student or family. Cross-curricular assignments provide for a single assignment to provide homework in multiple subjects. Homework needs to have genuine education value.

What about students who traditionally do not perform well on quizzes and tests? Sometimes, students use "test anxiety" as an excuse for poor preparation. However, we all recognize that students respond to testing situations differently. It becomes incumbent upon us as professionals to provide students with a variety of opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skill development, rather than a single approach that may or may not meet the intended goal. Assessments must be frequent. It is not appropriate to suggest that one test at the end of a quarter provides teachers with enough information, and students with the opportunity, to demonstrate what they have learned.

To this end, you will note that there are two different "test" categories; quizzes are frequent, informal, and should be used as formative assessments that are given on an every-week or every-other-week basis. These formative assessments inform the instructor regarding student learning of the concepts taught during that time period. A formative assessment should be as valuable to the instructor as to the student.

Tests should be infrequent and test mastery of large "chunks" of material. They can consist of chapter or novel tests and quarter, trimester or semester tests. These assessments reveal student mastery of the content. Tests may be broken down into smaller segments, given over a longer period of time, for students who may need that type of assistance.

The following table gives the relative weight for each area for grades 6-8:

Homework	20%
In-class work (including labs/presentations)	20%
Quizzes	20%
Tests	25%
Quarter/Semester Benchmarks	15%

All teachers in the Middle Grades are expected to use this grading scale in arriving to a final grade when calculating Progress Reports, and Trimester grades.

Grades will be assigned based on performance

- A: 90% - 100%**
- B: 80% - 89%**
- C: 70%- 79%**
- D: 60%-69%**
- F: 60% and below**

Awards

Students in the Middle Grades will have an opportunity to earn Student of the Month and Character Counts traits awards, and honors based on their GPA, as follows:

- Honors 3.0 GPA
- Excellent Honors 3.5 GPA
- Highest Honors 4.0 GPA

K-5th STANDARDS-BASED REPORT CARDS GRADING POLICY

- The Common Core State Standards set high expectations for student, staff, and schools. Achieving these career and college ready standards requires continuous progress monitoring and providing targeted support as needed.
- Standards describe what students should know and be able to do at each grade level in all subjects. A standards-based report card is a positive step in better communicating grade-level expectations for student learning.
- The standards based report card provides specific feedback on progress to the standards so students, families, and teachers can work together to set meaningful goals for improvement.
- The standards based report card Includes academic content and expected behaviors. The report card reports academic and behavior expectations using 1, 2, 3. It also includes

information about the student’s primary language, attendance, reading levels, and if any support services are provided for the student.

GRADING SCALE	
I= INTRODUCED	I= INTRODUCED The standard was introduced, but not assessed for mastery.
P=PRACTICED	P=PRACTICED The standard was practiced, but not assessed for mastery.
3=CONSISTENTLY MEETS STANDARD	3=CONSISTENTLY MEETS STANDARD The standard was assessed and the student demonstrated mastery of grade level skills and concepts. The student demonstrates proficiency of the standard expected at the time of the report. The student, with few errors, grasps and applies key concepts, processes, and skills for the grade level.
2=PROGRESSING TOWARDS STANDARD	2=PROGRESSING TOWARDS STANDARD The student has not yet met the standards but is progressing toward achieving skills and learning end-of-year grade level concepts. The student is beginning to, and occasionally does, meet the standard expected at the time of the report. The student is beginning to grasp and apply key concepts, processes, and skills for the grade level.
1=LIMITED PROGRESS TOWARDS STANDARD	1=LIMITED PROGRESS TOWARDS STANDARD Student is not meeting the grade level standards and demonstrates inconsistent understanding and application of the concepts. Intervention is needed from teachers and parents.

Grade Marks of Zero

The NSAA has a no zero policy in all subjects. There are definitions and limitations to this policy – please read this section carefully and completely.

A zero in a gradebook creates a number of issues that run counter to the school’s grading philosophy and policy.

1. Mathematically speaking, a zero is an unfair grade, particularly when a passing percentage in core classes is 70%.
2. Students have no reason to complete the assignment once a zero is assigned. Therefore, they miss the opportunity to learn those skills and concepts.
3. The assignment no longer shows up as “late” in the gradebook. Parents, who may be giving the gradebook a cursory glance, no longer see the assignment as late and assume it has been done when, in fact, it has not been completed.

Assignments received after the due date shall be reviewed by the teacher and as long as the assignment has been completed satisfactorily shall receive a mark of at least 50%. If the assignment has not been completed satisfactorily, it needs to be returned to the student to add any missing elements.

If a student fails to complete an assignment(s) at the end of a trimester or semester grading period, then that assignment may be marked as a zero or as “incomplete.”