

Q & A

Q. Why change Policy IK: Academic Achievement?

A. Here are the top reasons:

1. The purpose of grading and reporting is to communicate an accurate reflection of what a student knows and can do on state and district curriculum standards/learning goals to students, parents and educators.
2. Since we have new graduation requirements, we need to have a policy that reflects the changes. Policy IK has not been revised since 2002.
3. New state graduation requirements compel students to show they have mastered the essential skills in reading, math and writing based on their performance against standards. Policy IK establishes a framework to address these requirements.
4. We want to help teachers create or continue to use a balanced grading scale; Policy IK emphasizes accurate grading.

Q. Does the District intend to do away with letter grades when the new practices are implemented?

A. No. Improving the District's grading practices does not mean that letter grades will become obsolete. Ensuring a consistent, balanced grading system that assesses student learning in an equitable manner and one that supports student achievement is the desired outcome.

Q. Will a change in the District's grading practices affect students' admission and/or transition to college?

A. No. The District makes all major decisions in the best interest of students, and does not operate in isolation. The District regularly engages in discussions with other public school districts at the local and state level—as well as with colleges and universities. The District will continue to stay informed of policies/practices or new developments during this process—as with all decisions that could potentially impact our students.

Q. Does the 'traditional' 100-point scale have any use in this new system?

A. Yes. It will be used to assess individual assignments and tests (raw score). The same basis of thought around a student's grasp of a concept still applies—at least 6 out of 10 questions need to be answered correctly to show any level of proficiency with a subject. That means 60% is still the baseline for receiving a D, 70% for a C, and so on. Depending on which balanced grading scale teachers are using, they will take that raw score and put it through an appropriate calculation to

create a converted score for the grade book. This conversion process results in grades that are ready to be averaged together for the determination of an overall grade.

Q. If the traditional grading scale is still good enough for individual assignments and tests, why isn't it good enough for overall grades?

A. The issue with the traditional 100-point grading scale for the assignment of overall grades is that there are 59 ways to get an F and just 10 ways each to get an A, B, C or D—this gives F grades a disproportionately negative weight. Since most overall grades are determined by averaging multiple assignment and test grades, even just a few F grades will skew the overall grade downward. An F grade in a course should reflect the student's lack of proficiency in the subject—not the result of a few heavily weighted F grades pulling down the D and above grades.

Q. Doesn't this make it easier to get higher grades?

A. No. The modification of grading scales does not have an effect on how individual assignments and tests are scored, it merely changes the way they are entered into the grade book and used to determine an overall course grade.

Q. I understand that part of this process will be the elimination of deadlines and the ability for students to retake tests or re-do assignments until they get a passing score. How are students learning about responsibility and what life is like in the real world when they aren't held accountable at school?

A. We firmly believe in the importance of teaching responsibility, accountability and other positive character traits to our students. These skills are essential to success in college, work and life. The District will continue to hold students accountable, and to reinforce and track these behaviors, and will develop a method for reporting them separately from academic grades. The primary charge of any educational institution is to deliver high quality instruction to all students and to ensure they understand and can use what they've learned. If we can isolate grades as an indicator of that knowledge, we can do a better job of ensuring students have the skills and understanding they need to continue progressing in their education.