

# GRADING SYSTEMS

Alliance District Symposium  
April 2025



The Connecticut State Department of Education is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer.

# SETTING THE STAGE

# WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

**WHEN I HEAR THE  
TERM GRADING  
SYSTEM I THINK...**



**WHO IS RESPONSIBLE  
FOR DEVELOPING THE  
GRADING SYSTEM?**

**[PollEv.com /kwastinajackson767](https://www.pollEv.com/kwastinajackson767)**



# THE DIVERSITY OF GRADING SYSTEMS

- Explain the grading system currently used in your district/class  
(Total points, Weighted percent, Mastery Based, Letter grades, Number grades, Etc.)
- Provide additional information about how your district/school policies address retakes, extra credit, effort, homework, cheating, participation, make-up work, etc. in relation to the grading system



<https://tinyurl.com/alliance25>

# **CONTEXT & SIGNIFICANCE**

## WHY THIS MATTERS

- “...inconsistent grading practices and the ways they can inadvertently perpetuate achievement and opportunity gaps among our students make grading an issue of equity.” Feldman, 2019
- The primary purpose of the grading system is to clearly, accurately, consistently and fairly communicate learning progress and achievement to students, families, post-secondary institutions, and prospective employers. —Great Schools Partnership website

## KEY INSIGHTS

Grades are the main criteria in many school decisions:

- Course assignment (eligibility for advanced, honors, or AP classes)
- Graduation (completion of course requirements)
- Academic awards (valedictorian, summa cum laude)
- Extracurricular activities (athletics, clubs)
- Promotion (able to progress to next grade level or sequenced course)
- Retention (repeating a course or grade level)
- Additional supports (mandatory tutoring or remediation)
- Additional opportunities (special field trips, internships)
- Post-secondary opportunities and access (scholarships, college admission)
- College admission



# EIGHT TENETS OF GRADING

|  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| Communicate Information About Learning | Design Clear Grading & Reporting Guidelines | Use Common Rubrics or Scoring Guides   | Provide Low-Stakes Practice & Feedback                         |
| Report on Habits of Work Separately    | Organize Grade Books Consistently           | Report Grades Clearly and Consistently | Establish a Process for Determining Course or Standards Grades |

**HOW MANY OF THESE TENETS ARE PRACTICED IN YOUR SCHOOL OR DISTRICT?**



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Aurora Institute Symposium, 2020

# PRACTICES THAT FOSTER EQUITABLE GRADING

- Practices That Are Accurate and Mathematically Sound: Using algorithms that allow and support student growth rather than consigning students to failure.
- Practices That Value Knowledge, Not Environment or Behavior: Evaluating students only on their level of content mastery.
- Practices That Support Hope and a Growth Mindset: Encouraging mistakes as part of the learning process.
- Practices That Lift the Veil on How to Succeed: Making grades simpler and more transparent.
- Practices That Build “Soft Skills” and Motivate Students Without Grading Them: Supporting intrinsic motivation and self-regulation rather than relying on an extrinsic point system.





# **STORIES FROM THE FELLOWS**

# MIDDLETOWN



2021- District-  
Wide secondary  
gradebook  
categories and  
percentages



2022-  
Development  
and  
Implementation  
of Rubrics for  
standards-based  
grading



2024-  
Implementation  
of Common  
MPS Rubrics

# HARTFORD

- **History**
- **Current Practices**
- **Grading Steering Committee**

## **Goals:**

- Develop consistent, research-based **equitable grading** practices for 2025-26.
- Define a **clear purpose** for grading.
- Engage **teachers, administrators, parents, and students** for input.
- Separate **nonacademic factors** from academic grades.
- **BOE recommendations to be presented in May 2025.**



**DATA BEYOND A  
SCORE TO BUILD  
STUDENT AGENCY**

## GRADES SHOULD BE

- Motivational – supportive of student learning
- Accurate – correctly describe student's level of academic performance based on evidence of content knowledge not extra credit
- Informative – Communicate about student learning

## GRADES SHOULD NOT BE

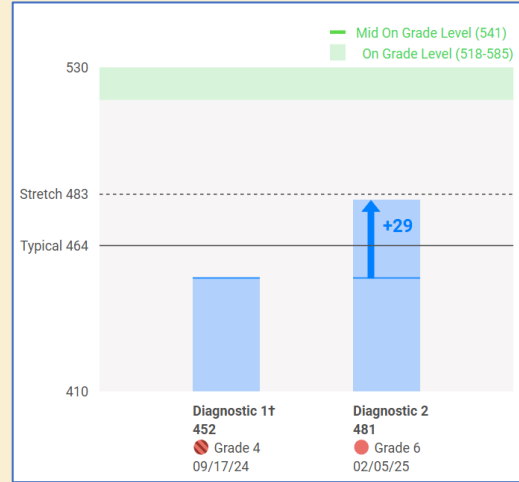
- Biased - based on evidence that is likely to be corrupted by a teacher's implicit bias or reflect a student's environment
- Rewards, punishments, or tools for compliance (academic dishonesty)
- An evaluation of student behaviors (attendance, tardies, effort, late work, participation, effort, etc.)



# ADDITIONAL DATA THAT TELLS THE STORY...

- Assignment completion
- Attendance
- Confidence
- Measures of growth
- Mindset

|         | Q3   |
|---------|------|
| Missing |      |
| 2       | 70.0 |
| 8       | 75.0 |
| 6       | 71.0 |
| 1       | 70.0 |
| 4       | 76.0 |
| 2       | 72.0 |
| 8       | 71.0 |
| 10      | 61.0 |



"I have a low grade in math. I'm terrible at math."

**Absences: 25.0 (13.0 unexcused) Tardies: 2 (2 unexcused) Dismissals: 11 (6 unexcused)**

# DISCUSSION

# REFLECTION ON GRADING SYSTEMS

Roundtable Conversation

What are strengths and weaknesses of your grading system?

How confident are you that the grades students receive are consistent, accurate, meaningful, and supportive of learning?

How do your grading systems evaluate the success of your portrait of the graduate?

How do your grading systems communicate information about the student as a learner?

How does your grading system allow students to take ownership of their learning?



# THANK YOU



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