

Secondary Grading and Reporting Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

July 30, 2015

Development

Q: How was the 2015-2016 Secondary Grading and Reporting Policy developed and who contributed to that development?

A: The Secondary Grading and Reporting guidance document was developed initially by a team from the Office of the Chief of Schools in the District of Columbia Public Schools, in order to provide guidance to schools, parents and stakeholders on grading and reporting procedures. The guidance was initially developed using existing practices, policy memos and procedures related to grading and reporting. The guidance was further developed by engaging multiple stakeholders including key DCPS offices, parent groups, teachers, students and the Washington Teachers Union.

Q: Why is a grading and reporting policy necessary?

A: The Secondary Grading and Reporting policy is necessary to ensure the accurate reporting of student achievement. It is also necessary to set equitable standards within all secondary schools for providing meaningful feedback to students and parents on student's academic progress. Finally, it establishes clear guidelines to school staff on the reporting of grades (marks).

Impact

Q: How much flexibility will school staff have within the Secondary Grading and Reporting Policy?

A: This guidance document provides the general framework or the minimum requirements for the grading and reporting of grades (marks) in all DCPS secondary schools. It is the expectation that all secondary schools will use this guidance as the minimum standard for the development and implementation of their grading policies. Schools and teachers may choose to exceed these standards.

Q: What does the Secondary Grading and Reporting policy mean for students and families?

A: The Secondary Grading and Reporting policy provides students and families with clear, equitable communication on the grading process. It also provides the mechanisms for students to advocate for their grades and take ownership of them.

Q: What does the Secondary Grading and Reporting policy mean for teachers?

A: The Secondary Grading and Reporting policy will provide for teachers guidance on

- Grading criteria
- Responsibilities for mark entry
- Grading factors and requirements for their syllabi

- Consistent communication regarding grades/marks district wide

Struggling or Students/Special Populations

Q: What does the Secondary Grading and Reporting policy mean for special populations?

A: The Secondary Grading and Reporting policy provides guidelines and standards for grading and reporting as they relate to English Language Learners, and students with special needs.

Q: What is an Instructional Support Plan?

A: An Instructional Support Plan is a comprehensive, written plan that details what activities and assignments failing or struggling students will complete to improve their grades and performance.

Grading Factors

Q: How were the grading factors determined?

A: The Office of Teaching and Learning and the Office of the Chief of Schools used feedback from teachers and district personnel to develop factors for each secondary content area. The DCPS grading policy provides category weights for each subject area allocated by quarter. Grades are divided into four major categories to reflect the diverse nature of student work and all grades must be scored objectively and supported by documentation.

Q: Can the grading factors change over time?

A: The grading factors will be reviewed periodically, in collaboration with the Office of Teaching and Learning and school personnel in order to determine necessary revisions. This policy will be revisited for possible revision in school year 2017-18.

Q: How much flexibility do teachers have within the grading factors?

A: Teachers must offer at least the required number of assignments in each of the first three categories in each content area; and each category can only be weighted as indicated in the policy (e.g. 10%, 50%, 40%, etc.). However, teachers may choose to offer more than the minimum number of assignments in each category.

Teachers may also choose which actual tasks or assessments, or combinations of tasks (within a category) to assign. The ones given in the grading policy (tests, journals, labs, etc.) are just examples. Teachers are free to choose other similar types of assignments or assessments to give. For instance, in the student work category, a teacher may choose to assign one of each type listed (one journal, one research paper, one homework assignment, one composition, one lab) or may choose to offer six homework assignments, three Cornerstone-related tasks, and one composition. They could also choose three of the types listed, and seven other **similar** assignments that are not listed. The possibilities are myriad. An important rule to keep in mind though, is that no one assignment can be worth more than 10% of a student's grade.

Other Questions

Q: What should I do if I have more questions?

A: Share those questions with your principal or his/her designee, and they will communicate all questions for your school in one document to the Office of the Chief of Schools. Those questions will either be answered directly or addressed in a revised version of this FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) document that will be published at the end of September.