



## Stafford High School Common Grading Policies & Philosophy

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A document outlining the values, beliefs and policies of the Stafford High School Community around the communication of student academic progress.

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# Stafford High School

## Grading Policies & Philosophy

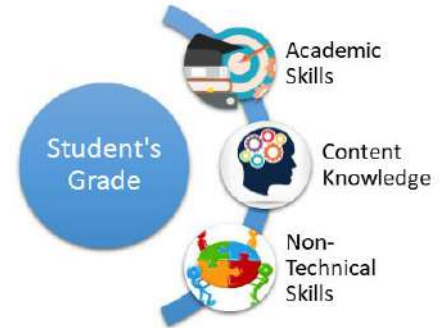


**“Grades are first and foremost communication; they are information, nothing more. The moment we make them something more, we corrupt their constructive use.” ~Rick Wormeli, Education Week**

### Philosophy:

It is the philosophy of Stafford High School that a student’s grade is a reflection of their progress in three areas that are averaged to a singular, numeric average:

- 1) Acquisition of the requisite content knowledge;
- 2) Display of proficiency in academic skills;
- 3) Non-technical skills that support a student’s success.



### Rationale:

The accurate, well-defined, and meaningful reporting out of student performance is foundational to student success. With these ideals in mind, we publish the following grading philosophy and subsequent policies and protocols, designed to meet the needs of our students, adequately prepare them for the rigors of postsecondary life, and inform our school community of the meaning of our grading system.

### Statements of Belief:

The faculty and staff of Stafford High School believe that student grades:

- are quantitative representations of student achievement;
- are a method of communicating areas of student strength and areas of concern;
- reflect a student’s content knowledge, academic skill proficiency, and the development of non-technical skills essential for student success outside the classroom setting;
- provide a holistic look at how students have progressed throughout the course’s curriculum during the time frame indicated (quarter, semester, etc.);

**“The grade is not the reward, nor can it ever be considered such. Once a grade becomes a bartering tool, its power to inform stakeholders and be used to make instructional decisions or document progress accurately is impugned.” ~ Rick Wormeli, Education Week**

### Grading Breakdown:

Research has shown that there are several elements that can **inaccurately impact** a student’s final grade within any given course at the secondary level. These erroneous elements include: *Student’s Behavioral Issues, Incorporating Subjective Judgements and Expectations, Using Grades as a Punishment or Reward, Convoluted Weighting Practices, Grading Homework and Other Formative*

# Stafford High School

## Grading Policies & Philosophy



Assessments, Grading on a Curve, & Allowing Extra Credit.<sup>1</sup> **These practices result in inaccurate measures of student growth.**<sup>2</sup> It is our intention to construct common grading protocols that accurately chart student progress and clearly communicate grading criteria to students and parents.

All Gradebooks within PowerSchool must be Departmentally Aligned with the agreed upon percentages:		
Summative Assessments* 30 - 40%	Formative Work 30 - 40 %	Habits of PRIDE 30%
Summative Assessments ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Are assessments of learning.</li> <li>· Answer the question: <i>Has the student met the target?</i></li> <li>· Measure a student's mastery of learning standards.</li> <li>· Require a student to synthesize and apply skills and content learned during the unit.</li> <li>· May be long or short term and may take a variety of forms.</li> <li>· Are administered less frequently but always with advance notice.</li> </ul>	Formative Work ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Are assessments for learning.</li> <li>· Answers the question: <i>How is the student progressing towards the learning target?</i></li> <li>· Provide feedback to both the student and teacher regarding progress towards mastery of learning standards.</li> <li>· Typically focuses on one or two specific skills or pieces of content</li> <li>· Help guide improvements to teaching and learning.</li> <li>· May be long or short term and may take a variety of forms.</li> <li>· Are administered more frequently</li> </ul>	This category includes tasks that represent: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Productive</li> <li>Responsible</li> <li>Independent</li> <li>Dedicated to Excellence</li> </ul> Thorough examination of student behaviors, personal responsibility, and ability to comply with the expectations set within the class.
Sample Items for Category	Sample Items for Category	Items for Category
Unit Tests or Quizzes Large Projects Culminating Writing Assignments Lab Reports Culminating Projects Final Draft Speeches Final Discussions Performance Tasks	Regular or Routine Quizzes Classwork/Homework Vocabulary Work Rough Drafts Exit Slips Responding to Questions (Written or Oral) Worksheets	See School Wide Rubric for Habits of PRIDE
<b>*Important Note:</b> There will be a minimum of three (3) summative assessments per quarter. No Summative Assessment may be worth greater than 10% of a student's quarterly average.		
<b>Note:</b> Percentages reflect the category weight contributing to the student's overall average.		

<sup>1</sup> Hanover Research, *Information Brief on Secondary Grading Practices*, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Reeves, Douglas, Lee Ann Jung, & Ken O'Connor, *What's Worth Fighting Against in Grading: Four Common Grading Practices can hurt students and erode instructional culture*, Educational Leadership: May 2017.

# Stafford High School

## Grading Policies & Philosophy



- **Summative Assessments** will be defined as any task assigned to students that is designed to determine their acquisition of specific content knowledge or academic skills pertinent to the subject being instructed upon. This may take the form of a Test, Quiz, Project, Essay, etc.
- **Formative work** will be defined as any task assigned to students designed to improve or practice a given concept, apply addressed academic skills, or build upon recently taught content. These may take the form of classwork, homework, informal group discussions, etc., so long as the grading of the assignment is structured to assess a student's development of content knowledge or academic skills.
- **Habits of PRIDE** will be defined as assessing student progress as **Productive, Responsible, and Independent individuals who are Dedicated to Excellence**. This evaluation will take place weekly and assess students on their preparedness for class, participation in class activities, and assignments completed throughout the week.

### Grading Calculations:

- **Quarterly Grades** represent twenty percent (20%) of a student's final mark and they are the average of the three categories (Summative Assessments, Formative Work, and Habits of PRIDE) stated above. Each class's percentage breakdown is dependent on the number of summative assessments given throughout the quarter.
- **Exam Grades** are based on the student performance on the Midterm and Final Examination for each of the student's respective courses. Each exam will represent ten percent (10%) of the student's final mark for the course.
- **Semester Averages** consist of the first and second quarter (20% each) combined with the midterm examination (10%) or the third and fourth quarter (20% each) combined with the final examination (10%). The semester averages will indicate the student's performance in half of the course.
- The **final grade** will represent the average of the two semester marks in full year courses or the semester grade in half year courses. This is the grade that will appear on the student official transcript.

Course	Q1	Q2	M	S1	Q3	Q4	F	S2	Y1
Full Year	20%	20%	10%	50%	20%	20%	10%	50%	100%
Half Year	40%	40%	20%	100%					100%

### Assignment Limitations:

Stafford High School believes that student grades should not be based on compliance or simply the completion of numerous tasks in the name of strengthening student independent work completion. To this end, we are establishing an assignment limitation to **a minimum of twenty (20) graded assignments**

**Stafford High School**  
**Grading Policies & Philosophy**



with no more than thirty (30) within a given quarter, as well as having a minimum of three (3) summative assessments. All other formative work above the graded assignment limitations, will be accounted for within the completion criterion of the Habits of PRIDE rubric weekly student evaluation. Additionally, teachers will utilize the rubric below to implement a weekly evaluation of each student's development in the non-technical skills, we believe this is essential to every student's success. Each assignment will be designated under one of the three established categories contributing to the overall average a student receives for the given quarter.

**All gradebooks at Stafford High School should have the following for each quarter:**

- **Minimum three (3) Summative Assessments**
- **Between twenty (20) & thirty (30) pieces of formative/summative work, graded for accuracy.**
- **Eight (8) Habits of PRIDE evaluations (see rubric below)**
  - **Work not specifically graded within the formative work category can be applied to the completion criterion of the school wide Habits of PRIDE rubric.**

Habits of PRIDE School Rubric	0 Non-Participant	1 Beginning	2 Developing	3 Approaching	4 Meeting
<b>Preparedness</b>	Student was unprepared for class throughout the period assessed.	Student is largely unprepared for class throughout the period assessed.	Student is generally prepared for class throughout the period assessed.	Student mostly possesses all of the relevant class materials for each meeting.	Student has all relevant class materials for each meeting.
<b>Participation</b>	Student did not contribute to the class' activities throughout the period assessed.	Student has displayed minimal participation in class activities throughout the period assessed.	Student is generally alert and has participated in class activities throughout the period assessed.	Student is mostly alert and regularly contributes to class activities.	Student remains alert and contributes to the activities during the class.
<b>Completion</b>	Student failed to submit any of the expected assignments throughout the period assessed,	Student lacked regular submission of expected work or submitted mostly incomplete work.	Student work submissions and/or completeness of expected work is in need of improvement.	Student has mostly completed the expected assignments throughout the period assessed,	Student completes all expected assignments throughout the time period assessed.



*“Teachers have told me that when they suggest to students that they’re going to have to retake it there’s resistance from students, but they ultimately appreciate the teacher doing that and build a stronger relationship ... There’s no clearer message that your teacher cares about you than that they won’t let you fail.” ~ Joe Feldmen, author of *Grading for Equity**

### Late Work Policy:

As our grading philosophy focuses on student performance, academic skill proficiency, and the demonstration of non-technical skills. While we recognize that the meeting of deadlines, effective time management, and task prioritization are essential life skills, they are not the driving force behind determining a student’s academic performance at Stafford High School. As such our late work policy allows for the following:

- Students can achieve full credit for an assignment that is completed by the due date of the assignment in question.
- Students will receive a **maximum of a 25% deduction from the final grade** for any late assignment so long as it is submitted prior to the summative assessment that the content and/or skill is initially evaluated. Once the instructed knowledge or skill moves from ‘new knowledge’ to ‘expected content’, the assignment can no longer be submitted for credit.
  - ◆ **Final Grade x 0.75 = Deducted Score**
  - ◆ Should a student submit a late assignment and receive 85% on the final grade, the deduction would come off of the 85 and not off the total score allowed;  
**85 x 0.75 = 63.75**
- Students may only receive a zero for assignments not submitted by the date of the summative for the particular content or skill that is being instructed or in cases where plagiarism or cheating is involved.
- All submitted assignments, so long as they are presented to the teacher within the timeframes established above, will be graded and receive the requisite credit as detailed above.
- For extended assignments, such as projects, larger essays, or presentations, students should be graded for the portions that they do complete. The 25% deduction will come off the portion of the assignment that is not submitted on the due date.
  - ◆ Late submissions on extended Summative Assessments can be submitted for the 25% deduction prior to the first assignment being returned to any student in the class (i.e. essays, projects, presentations, etc.).
- The late work policy can be adjusted in the following cases:
  - ◆ Excused Absence (including Extraordinary Educational Opportunity, Medical Absences, etc.)



## Stafford High School Grading Policies & Philosophy



- Students will have the number of days absent to complete the missing work prior to any deduction being imposed (2 Excused Absences = 2 days to complete work).
- ◆ Specific IEP or 504 plan accommodations that speak to extra time on work or assessments.
- ◆ Extenuating circumstances as mutually agreed upon between the student and teacher discussed prior to the assessment/assignment being given.

### Assessment Retake Policy:

It is the belief of the Stafford High School community that grades should reflect what students know and what they are able to do. Recognizing that students can arrive at a concept or reach proficiency in an academic skill area at differing times, we establish that students can retake any summative assessment that was **initially graded below 70% of the total percentage** awarded for said summative assessment provided that the student meets the following criteria:

- Within 48 hours from the receipt of the graded summative assessment *through email*, the student must inform their teacher of their intention to retake it
- The student must have completed all formative assignments addressing the content being assessed prior to the taking of the initial assessment
- The student will have one week from the time they received the original summative assessment to complete the retake
- The grade received on the retake (even if lower) **will override the original**.

The retake may take a slightly different form than the initial summative assessment, however it is to assess the same content and academic skills. Students can retake the summative assessment with their teacher, case manager, school counselor, or in the main office.

### Incompletes:

Incompletes will be awarded to students who have presented documentation regarding extreme occurrences (medical, familial issues, etc.) that were proven to have detrimental effects on the accuracy of the student's average for the given marking period. Incompletes are awarded through the Stafford High School Student Assistance Team (SAT) where School Counselors, Interventionists, and Building Administrators collaborate to determine academic planning for students in need. Students will have **two (2) weeks to complete any outstanding assignments** or assessments at which point their grade will be officially recorded.

### Scoring Rubrics:

All assignments or assessments are to be graded with the use of a commonly utilized scoring rubric that is provided to the students prior to the issuing of the assignment. These rubrics should be designed to progress student proficiency in a particular and relevant academic skill or course

## Stafford High School Grading Policies & Philosophy



or grade specific content. These rubrics need to be commonly agreed upon and utilized by at least two staff members within a shared content or grade level. The use of school wide rubrics (either a portion of or in their entirety) is strongly encouraged.

### Summation of Key Points:

- **First and foremost, these policies are designed to place the focus of grading on student learning.**
- Student grades are an averaging of three elements: content knowledge, academic skill acquisition, and non-technical skills.
- Final Grades are averages of the four quarters (20% each) and the two exams (10% each).
  - Quarterly Grades are the average of three categories within a student's PowerSchool; **Summative Assessments (30% - 40%), Formative Work (30% - 40%), & Habits of PRIDE (30%)**
  - Habits of PRIDE will be a weekly evaluation counting for thirty percent (30%) of a student's quarterly average based upon a student's preparedness, participation, and completeness.
  - No singular summative assessment can account for more than 10% of a student's quarterly average. Meaning that there will be a minimum of three (3) summative assessments per quarter.
- Late submission of assignments will be permitted so long as they are submitted prior to the assigning of the summative assessment, which assesses the academic skill or content addressed in the assignment.
- Summative Assessments are able to be retaken as long as the student has completed all the relevant formative work, the request is made within 48 hours of the student receiving the work back, and the assessment is taken within a week of the original assessment.
  - Note: the retake will override the initial grade.
- Students will receive an Incomplete for a grade should their individual circumstance warrant that designation. The Student Assistance Team will determine when an Incomplete is warranted and the student will have two weeks to submit any outstanding work.
- Common scoring rubrics should be utilized for all assignments.





**Addendum I:**

**Pertinent Board of Education Policies:**

**5121 -**

**Examination/Grading/Rating**

The Board of Education seeks, through performance objectives in its instructional program, to make achievement both recognizable and possible for students.

The issuance of grades on a regular basis serves to promote a process of continuous evaluation of student performance, to inform the student, the student's parents and counselor of his/her progress, and to provide a basis for bringing about change in student performance, if such change seems necessary.

Students enrolled in grades 3 through 8 and 10 shall take a statewide mastery examination provided by and administered under the supervision of the State Board of Education. Achievement of a satisfactory score on the mastery test shall not be required as the sole criterion for promotion or graduation

**5124(a) -**

**Reporting to Parents District/School Report Cards**

To provide pertinent information regarding the academic performance of the district and its schools, the Board shall annually develop and publicly disseminate a district report card and report cards for the individual schools, the Strategic School Profile, in accordance with federal and state laws and regulations.

The Board, at its discretion, may include additional information not required by law on the district report card. District Report Cards District report cards shall contain the following information:

1. Aggregate data on student achievement at each proficiency level on state academic assessments and disaggregated data reflecting race, ethnicity, gender, disability, migrant status, English proficiency and status as economically disadvantaged.
2. Comparison of above student groups regarding achievement levels on state assessments.
3. Percentage of students not tested, disaggregated by student groups.
4. Most recent two-year trend data in achievement by subject area and grade level in areas where assessments are required.
5. Aggregate data on state indicators to determine Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), such as attendance rates for elementary schools.
6. Graduation rates for secondary schools, disaggregated by student groups.
7. Information on the district's performance regarding Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and the number, percentage and names of schools identified for improvement, including how long they have been so identified.
8. Professional qualifications of teachers and percentage of teachers with emergency or provisional credentials.



9. Percentage of classes not taught by highly qualified teachers, in the aggregate and disaggregated by schools in the top quartile and bottom quartile of poverty.
10. Comparison of district students' achievements on state assessments to students in the state as a whole. 5124.1(b) Students Reporting to Parents District Report Cards (continued)
11. Measures of student needs and school resources including technological resources.
12. Reduction of racial, ethnic and economic isolation.
13. Special education including identification rates by disability, rates at which special education students are exempted from mastery testing, achievement data, rates at which students identified are indicated as no longer needed services, availability of supplemental education services, instructional time with nondisabled peers, number of students placed out-of-district, and improvement strategies.
14. Information about parental involvement, measures taken to improve parental involvement, including, but not limited to, employment of methods to engage parents in the planning and improvement of school programs and methods to increase support to parents working at home with their children on learning activities.
15. Information about truancy which includes the type of data the State Department of Education is required to collect on attendance and unexcused absences in compliance with Federal reporting requirements (NCLB).

School Report Cards School report cards shall contain the following information:

1. Same information contained on the district report card.
2. Whether the school has been identified for improvement.
3. Information that compares the school's students' achievement on state assessments and indicators of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) to students in the district and the state as a whole.

The Superintendent or designee shall be responsible to ensure:

1. Required information is annually updated and posted.
2. District report card and school report cards are provided to parents in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand.
3. District and school report cards are made available to the public through posting on the Internet, distribution to the media, and distribution to public agencies.
4. Public access is provided to the state report card and the school profile maintained by the state.

#### **6146.1 -**

#### **Grading Systems / Weighted Grades**

It is the philosophy of the Stafford Public School District that students respond more positively to the opportunity for success than to the threat of failure. The district seeks, therefore, through learner objectives and its instructional program, to make achievement both recognizable and



possible for students. Achievement will be emphasized in the process of evaluating student progress.

Evaluation of student progress is a primary responsibility of the teacher. The highest possible level of student achievement should be a common goal of both school and home. A close working relationship between home and school is essential to the accomplishment of this goal. Regular communication with parents or guardians, utilizing a variety of methods, regarding the scholastic progress of their student is a basic component of this working relationship. It is the responsibility of the school and individual staff members to keep parents or guardians well informed through continuous and accurate record of each student's achievement.

Placement is determined each year during the course selection process, but is subject to review at any time at the request of a student, parent or professional staff member. Texts, assignments and independent work will vary among levels; however, all courses are in alignment with the district Core Values and Beliefs and 21st Century Learning Expectations.

Regularly issued report cards, combined with scheduled parent-teacher conferences, and other communication vehicles helps promote a process of continuous evaluation of student progress. The grading and reporting systems as developed by the administration and faculty are subject to the approval of the Superintendent and Board of Education.

### **Weighted Grades**

The Stafford High School curriculum contains a wide variety of courses at various levels of academic challenge. Students are allowed considerable choice and are encouraged to strive for academic excellence. A system of grade weighting recognizes the difference in student achievement. Grade weighting encourages and rewards students for selecting courses that are more challenging and of increased difficulty.

The grade weighting / class ranking system shall be implemented for the high school and published annually in the student / parent handbook and the Program of Studies.

Parents and students shall be advised annually, via the student / parent handbook, of these guidelines and the specifics of the weighted program.

### **Rank In Class**

Rank in class is used to determine the valedictorian, salutatorian, and class scholar designations and students must attend Stafford High School three (3) academic years to be eligible at the time of graduation. The rank in class will be determined by adding up the grades for all courses and dividing by the number of credits.

All courses are assigned to one of three levels, with the highest level being considered the most difficult. Each level is assigned a quality point multiplier based upon academic difficulty. A student's grade will be multiplied by an assigned point multiplier and then average to determine

## Stafford High School Grading Policies & Philosophy



class rank. The Program of Studies identifies the level of difficulty for each course. Each level is assigned a quality point multiplier, as shown below:

General = 1.0

College = 1.05

Honors / AP = 1.10

**Note:** Physical Education grades are included when computing grade point averages (GPA) for class rank. Independent study, courses taken on a pass/fail basis, and summer school grades are not utilized when computing class rank. As of July 1, 2018, transfer credits are not utilized when computing class rank and will be designated as a “T” on the transcript.

6154 -

### **Homework**

The responsibility of the school district to educate the student is carried out by the teachers through effective classroom instruction and the careful delegation of independent study. It is important for the student to be taught the concepts related to the subject area and how to study in school before he/she is given work to do at home. There is, therefore, a steady increase in the amount of homework expected of students from the elementary grades through high school. Worthwhile homework benefits students. Homework also affords the parent an opportunity to observe his/her child's academic progress. Homework should be an extension of the class lesson, be clearly understood by students, be well planned and meaningful, and be evaluated with feedback provided to the students.

Basically, there are three types of homework:

1. Practice of Skills: Practice provides students with the opportunity to reinforce and master specific skills presented in class and to review content.
2. Preparation for Future Classes: Prepares students for the next class meeting, and may include reading, library research, or other information-gathering activities.
3. Extension of Classwork: Extension focuses on individual application, research, and study; takes students beyond work covered in class.

Guidelines for time required for homework at each level (elementary, middle, high school) will take into consideration the needs of the students. Teachers shall assign homework according to administrative regulations.

5121.3 -

### **Student Honor Code: Cheating/Plagiarism**

The Stafford Public Schools continually strive for academic excellence. Students are expected to pursue their school work with integrity and honesty. Cheating and plagiarism demonstrates a lack of integrity and character that is inconsistent with the goals and values of the District.

This policy focuses on two common areas of academic dishonesty: cheating and plagiarism is defined as follows.

Cheating is defined as, including but not limited to, the following:

1. Lending and/or copying or attempting to copy from another student's homework, quiz, test, essay, lab report, project, assignment, etc

## Stafford High School Grading Policies & Philosophy



2. Accessing information for the completion of assessments through such means as cheat sheets, use of unauthorized electronic devices, and discussion of test information with other students.
3. Attempting to obtain/attainment of test questions and/or copies of tests outside the classroom setting.
4. Altering or interfering with grading (forging signatures, changing, or inserting answers on work after grading).
5. Allowing another student to copy answers during a test situation or verbally disclosing answers to another student.
6. Collaborating with other students on an assignment in direct violation of teacher's instructions.
7. Using books and electronic information in generating an assignment or during an assessment in direct violation of teacher's instructions.

Plagiarism is defined as and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Copying material from the source, including the Internet, without citing the source, or citing the source but omitting quotation marks.
2. Paraphrasing the source without proper citation.
3. Failure to cite correct page numbers.
4. Copying stories, in whole or part, which appear in books, magazines, television, or video.
5. Copying directly, without making any changes, alterations or adaptations from a drawing, painting, illustration, photographic/digital image, or graphic symbol without citing the source.
6. Submitting papers written in whole or part by someone else, including the Internet.
7. Submitting papers on which the student has received substantial assistance from peers and/or adults that dramatically changes the character of the work so that it is no longer the student's own.
8. Submitting a paper purchased from a research or term paper service, including, but not limited, to the Internet.

A student who engages in any form of academic dishonesty may be subject to the loss of credit for the work in question, as well as other disciplinary measures.