



Grading at  
Austin  
High  
School

2019-  
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# Grading at Austin High School

## Grading Philosophy – Austin High School

### Philosophy

Grades at Austin High School will reflect a student's content knowledge. Other important student characteristics such as behavior and work ethic will be reported separately.

### Rationale

Austin High School recognizes that grading, homework, make-up opportunities, report cards, and reporting practices in general should be consistent, accurate, fair, meaningful, research-based, and connected to state and national standards. Because of this, we believe that a student's content knowledge should be reported separately from behavior and work ethic.

Our goal is to provide students with opportunities for self-evaluation and growth through a variety of educational opportunities. It is essential for us to evaluate the effectiveness of curricular, instructional, and assessment practices and programs.

### How are secondary grades calculated?

In order to help strike an appropriate balance between two weighted categories – 1) Knowledge Assessments & Performance Tasks and 2) Practice & Progress Checks – all courses at AHS will weigh the scores collected in their grade books according to the AHS Guidelines for Weighting Secondary Grades (chart below). This “90% and 10%” balance reflects the high school's emphasis on assigning semester grades mostly on a majority of summative evidence, so that grades are more indicative of actual knowledge than practice opportunities:

Austin High School Weighting of Grades	
Knowledge Assessments & Performance Tasks	Practice & Progress Checks
<b>Assessments OF Learning</b> -summary of learning -minimum 4 per grading period – 8 per semester  <b>90% of final grade</b>	<b>Assessments FOR Learning</b> -focus on improvement -provides practice in order to learn (not all practice must be scored)  <b>10% of final grade</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Unit assessments, and also mid-unit assessments (quizzes/tests) for long units, which measure course and unit standards	<input type="checkbox"/> Independent practice on daily work (daily assignments & practice)
<input type="checkbox"/> Major performance tasks – mainly products, performances, and projects (e.g., essays; artwork; visual representations; models; multimedia; oral presentations; lab experiences; live or recorded performances)	<input type="checkbox"/> Brief progress checks (e.g.; short quizzes over multiple lessons; reviews or warm-ups)

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## Life Skills Grade

This grade will be published on student report cards. It allows students and parents to gauge timeliness, effort, and overall behavior of the student. These are also important skills, but will not be calculated in the letter grade for the course. These grades are not posted on the transcript at this time. The determination of the life skills rubric grade will be left to the professional judgment of the teacher according to the following rubric.

KEY TO TERMS	4	3	2	1
	<b>Acceptable</b>		<b>Unacceptable</b>	
<b>Timeliness</b>	Consistently meets established deadlines for all assigned tasks.	Usually meets established deadlines for all assigned tasks.	Inconsistently meets established deadlines for all assigned tasks.	Rarely meets established deadlines for all assigned tasks.
<b>Effort</b>	Consistently demonstrates initiative and self-direction	Usually demonstrates initiative and self-direction	Inconsistently demonstrates initiative and self-direction	Rarely demonstrates initiative and self-direction
<b>Behavior</b>	Consistently contributes to a productive learning atmosphere by following expectations	Usually contributes to a productive learning atmosphere by following expectations	Inconsistently contributes to a productive learning atmosphere by following expectations	Rarely contributes to a productive learning atmosphere by following expectations

## Grading Parameters

Teachers at Austin High School will use the following grading parameters when establishing grades for their students:

- A. Grades should reflect student academic achievement.
- B. Grading should not be used for disciplinary purposes.
- C. Students and their parents will be provided with information regarding grading practices. They will also be provided with information explaining how behavioral qualities will be addressed.
- D. Parents will be informed regularly (at least 4 times per year) of their child's achievement and progress. Additionally, a parent portal will be available to parents so they can access, their child's grades and scores.
- E. Students will be taught how to utilize their student portal account and will be expected to access this account regularly.
- F. The professional judgment of teachers should be respected.
- G. Generally, practice work submitted late will not receive a reduced score. However, in order to receive credit, all work must be turned in by the end of the next consecutive unit of study.
- H. Missing work will be reflected in the grade book as a zero.

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- a. Late work will be graded when time allows
- I. Initial assessments must be completed with effort. Students who miss an initial assessment must initiate taking the make-up with the teacher. If the student does not initiate this conversation, the teacher may assign a reasonable time for the student to take the assessment as outlined by the department in course syllabi. (ex. Counseling office during class, at designated reassessment time, in the classroom during class if appropriate, Saturday School)
  - a. If a student refuses to take the initial assessment the teacher will contact the parent and schedule a time to make-up the test. If the student refuses to take the test after parent contact, the grade will be entered as zero with “student refused to take the assessment” in the comments. Parent contact is an essential component of this process.
  - b. Students that miss the initial assessment due date/test day, and do not make up the assessment according to the course syllabus, may forfeit the ability to reassess.
- J. Students will have the opportunity to reassess knowledge & performance assessments if all of their practice work is completed ***with effort*** prior to the initial assessment. Reassessments will cover the same content, but may be in a different format. Reassessments must be completed by the end of the next consecutive unit of study.
- K. Students will have the opportunity to re-take a knowledge & performance assessment once. Students will receive the reassessment score.
  - a. Students need to come and talk to teacher about a reassessment
  - b. Students will need to complete an action plan of the learning they will do to prepare for the reassessment
  - c. Teacher will designate 2 dates/times where student will be able to complete the reassessment
  - d. All work must be turned in ***with effort*** before a student can retake a knowledge or performance assessment.
  - e. Student needs to advocate for themselves with the opportunity to complete a reassessment
    - i. If the student does not show to the reassessment opportunities and does not discuss the conflict with the teacher prior to the reassessment dates, the student will not be able to complete the reassessment
- L. Teachers will not offer extra credit in order to improve a grade.
- M. Academic dishonesty will be addressed with behavioral consequences. Teachers will reassess and determine the actual level of achievement when initiated by the student.
- N. Attendance will not be considered in grade determination. Students who exceed 10 absences per semester may have a grade held (H) until they meet with administration.
- O. Scores on group projects should have a minimal impact on a student’s overall grade. Group projects should have an individual score included as part of the assessment.
- P. Teachers will provide clear explanation of all assessments and practice within the description section of Infinite Campus.

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- Q. Grades should be assigned based on students' performance on preset standards – not on students' achievement compared to other students.

## Austin High School FAQs about High School (9 – 12) Grading & Reporting Practices

This information is provided to help staff, students, and parents better understand the High School's grading and reporting process. Please visit the Austin High School website for more information

### What is the Austin High School grading scale?

A	100 – 93%
A-	92 – 90%
B+	89 – 87%
B	86 – 83%
B-	82 – 80%
C+	79 – 77%
C	76 – 73%
C-	72 – 70%
D+	69 – 67%
D	66 – 63%
D-	62 – 60%
F	59 – 0%

### Why are Knowledge Assessments & Performance Tasks weighted differently than Practice & Progress Checks?

In order to be an accurate measure of what a student has learned, a grade needs be based primarily on work that was actually scored after the student had sufficient instruction and practice to be held responsible for the results. Therefore, Knowledge Assessments and Performance Tasks are weighted more heavily. It is not fair to weigh Practice & Progress Checks as heavily as Knowledge Assessments & Performance Tasks because during this time a student is still learning the content, and it is reasonable to expect mistakes.

### How many major assessments and performance tasks should students at Austin High School be assigned each grading period?

Students should have ample opportunity to provide evidence of learning, so several knowledge assessment and performance tasks should be entered into the grade book each grading period (minimum of 4 at mid-semester and minimum of 8 at semester). The body of evidence for all Knowledge Assessments & Performance Tasks should reflect a variety of relevant and meaningful assessments and tasks, each of which directly measures the course standards.

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## **If Practice & Progress Checks are only 10% of the grade, why should a student bother completing it?**

The purpose of Practice & Progress Checks is to provide students with experience learning new concepts, check frequently for understanding, provide effective feedback, and then provide additional instruction and practice as needed. If the Practice & Progress Checks work does not get completed, these benefits are lost, and the scores on the Knowledge Assessments & Performance Tasks will likely decrease as a result.

## **What if an AHS student doesn't complete a Practice & Progress Check?**

Students at Austin High School will have until the completion of the next unit of study to complete all Practice & Progress Checks, unless there are extenuating circumstances. Work turned in up to that point will not have any late work penalty applied. It must also be noted that in order for a student to redo a Knowledge Assessment & Performance Task they must have all of their Practice & Progress Check work for that particular unit completed prior to the initial assessment.

## **Why were the AHS grading and reporting practices established?**

Historically, grading practices have varied widely among and with American schools. Individual practices have sometimes been harmful to the learning process and students' motivation to learn. Thus, the Austin High School Department Chairs began to look at grading in the winter of 2010 to ensure that the grades assigned to 9 – 12 students would be consistent, accurate, meaningful, and supportive of learning. Grading was identified as a high school initiative for three reasons:

- 1) The need to better link grading and reporting practices to other 9 – 12 curricular, instructional, and assessment philosophies and practices;
- 2) The need to have consistent grading practices within and among our 9 – 12 grade levels and courses;
- 3) Parental access to Infinite Campus, our computerized grading system.

Additionally, we felt the need to align our grading with current research and best practices.

## **How were the AHS grading and reporting practices established?**

Based on a review of educational research and best practices, especially the research done by Ken O'Connor as well as the work done by staff and administration at Ellis Middle School, the Department Chairs identified a set of effective grading practices in the spring of 2010. These practices were reviewed and redefined by the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Team at Austin High School in August, 2010 and school-wide in the 2012-13 school year.

## **What is the appropriate role of daily practice?**

The purpose of daily practice in school is for students to develop knowledge and skills effectively and efficiently through repetition and feedback that is accurate, helpful, and timely; it is not to provide scoring opportunities. The purpose is not for a teacher to judge a students' final achievement of a topic, but instead to evaluate where the student is in the learning process, diagnose any problems, and provide necessary help so the student can learn the material

Teachers have responsibility for communicating to students the strong correlation between practice - both guided and independent practice – and performance on assessments and performance tasks. Students are

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responsible for completing all assigned work to the best of their ability. Individual teachers have responsibility for keeping their students before, during, and/or after school to get all types of work completed.

## **What are legitimate purposes for grading students' work?**

The main purpose of grading students' work is to communicate achievement status to students, parents, and others during, and at the conclusion of, each grading period. Additional purposes are to provide information that students can use for self-evaluation and growth; encourage student growth and progress in learning;; identify students for available opportunities and course placement; and evaluate the effectiveness of the high school's curricular, instructional, and assessment practices and programs.

## **How are the AHS grading and reporting practices being implemented?**

To facilitate a consistent implementation of the Austin High School Grading Philosophy, it was decided that each year the Department Chairs would review the how implementation was going and determine the best course of action for the staff and students. Effective grading practices are dependent on teachers' understanding and use of quality assessments practices – both the formative assessments (focus on improvement) and the summative assessments (summary of learning) which are used to measure student learning. It should also be noted that there remains some flexibility for individual teacher usage, given that effective grading by teachers must be based on both evidence and professional judgment.

## **How do the AHS grading and reporting procedures more accurately reflect student achievement?**

Grades will more accurately reflect what students know, understand, and how they can use knowledge in meaningful ways. Behavior, participation, and attitude will no longer be factored into achievement grades, unless they are specifically part of the course's curriculum standards. Grades will be based primarily on various assessments and performance tasks, which reflect larger chunks of learning. Also, when a score accurately reflects a student's knowledge and skills, weaknesses can be detected early so the student can get extra help in a more timely manner.

## **How can students earn additional opportunities to improve their performance on knowledge tasks and assessments?**

Once earned, students must be given additional opportunities to show what they know and can do on all knowledge assessments. Life isn't always about getting things right the first time, but doing a job well and showing competence in time. WHETHER an AHS student has learned a curriculum standard is for more important than WHEN they learned it. Students need to be given the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in different ways and at different times. AHS teachers are expected to vary the types and methods of assessment given as well as the number of assessment opportunities and time available, based on their student's needs.

The practice of providing multiple opportunities does not mean second chances should automatically be given to students for every assessment or performance task. Students must earn second chances in some manner before they are allowed additional opportunities to demonstrate what they know/understand and can do with this knowledge. Any reteaching, review, or reassessment should be done at the teacher's convenience. When

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second chance opportunities are provided, they should be made available to all students who have met the reassessment criteria. A student's score on a reassessment should not be averaged with the original score but instead should be given the reassessment score that represents the student's knowledge, with professional judgment necessary in some situations.

### **How might the new AHS grading practices impact student's grades?**

The rationale for addressing 9 – 12 grading at AHS was never to intentionally raise or lower students' grades or to make our high school match other schools or colleges. That said some students will now earn (emphasis on EARN) higher or lower grades because achievement and behavior are now reported separately, grades are now determined primarily on assessments and major tasks, and how well students prepare for and perform on all assigned work. As it should be a student's best opportunity to achieve the desired grade is to complete all assigned practice, performance tasks, and assessments to the best of their ability. Since extra credit opportunities are very limited, and students' attitudes, participation, and other dispositions are now graded separately, students must show what they know/understand and how they can apply knowledge to earn their grades.

The AHS grading practices are not intended to punish a student in any way. Instead, these grading practices should help students get any extra help needed as soon as possible. Too often in the past, students who did not understand and were not able to apply the content were assigned inflated grades due to several nonacademic factors, which created an additional set of problems related to readiness for the next course or college and also left academic weaknesses undetected and unresolved. Artificially inflated grades, although well intended by teachers assigning them, in fact have contributed to more students "falling through the cracks" by delaying the academic assistance needed and lowered performance on many summative measures such as the MCA II and ACT.

### **What research is available on grading practices, and does it support the AHS grading guidelines?**

Until recently, grading practices were not widely studied in our country. There is now a growing research base to match the increased interest in how teachers grade students' work. Currently research very much supports our high school grading practices. One of the leading experts in Ken O'Connor from Canada, and his book How to Grade for Learning: Linking Grades to Standards (2002) and A Repair Kit for Grading: 15 Fixes for Broken Grades (2007) have been studied at Austin High School. Books from other grading experts that can be reviewed include Robert Marzano's Transforming Classroom Grading and Rick Wormelli's Fair Isn't Always Equal. Rick Stiggins, Tom Guskey, Doug Reeves, and Jay McTighe are some other authorities who have written articles that administration and staff have read as well.