

# Frequently Asked Questions

## SUSD Middle School Grading Guidelines (Revised – June, 2014)

### **Q. Why are we discussing grading practices in SUSD?**

**A.** SUSD fosters a culture of learning for all to be successful in college and careers. In order to support rigorous learning expectations, SUSD has established grading practices that reduce variability amongst classes and schools while supporting all students in their mastery of academic standards. The vision of the new grading practices is to promote and ensure fair, consistent and equitable practices across SUSD.

### **Q. How do middle school grading guidelines support students in the transition from elementary to high school?**

**A.** The middle school grading guidelines are connected to the grading practices established at the elementary level and ensure consistency with those specific to the high school. As a result, the middle school guidelines are designed to support a successful transition from standards-based reporting at the elementary level to the credit-bearing years of high school. The guidelines define fair and motivational grading practices. They also afford middle level content area teams at each site the autonomy to establish weights and practices within the parameters identified, based on the programs offered at each school and the needs of the students being served.

### **Q. Why are work habits and conduct not included in students' grades?**

**A.** SUSD recognizes that the purpose of grades is to measure academic achievement of course/content standards. Ultimately, grades should provide feedback to improve academic performance. Academic grades should not be used for communicating work habits or conduct. When grades are true reflections of mastery of academic content, report card grades will be more consistent with student performance on standards based assessments (i.e. District benchmarks, state assessments).

Conduct grades will be included on student report cards and indicated by a conduct code. Conduct codes are based on student behaviors. Indicators for conduct are reflected in the O, S, N, and U scale on the SUSD report card. Teachers are to provide a conduct code of O, S, N, and U for each student at each quarter. Indicators of N and U will be accompanied by specific comments.

Indicators for conduct include: O – Outstanding S – Satisfactory N – Needs Improvement U – Unsatisfactory

### **Q. How does the conduct grade impact honor roll and principal's lists?**

**A.** Academic grades and conduct grades are both indicators to determine honor rolls and principals' lists. To qualify for honor roll, students must earn at least a 3.5 grade point average with no conduct marks indicating a "U" and no more than one "N." To qualify for principals' lists,

students must earn at least a 3.8 average with no conduct marks indicating a “U” and no more than one “N.” See SUSD Policy IKD, Recognition for Scholastic Achievement, for more information.

**Q. Report card grades will be determined by the following assignment categories: Homework/Coursework and Assessments. What is the difference between “Homework/Coursework” and “Assessments” and what are examples of types of assignments I can expect to see for each category?**

**A.** Academic grades recorded on report cards represent a balance of a student’s work, reflecting the student’s learning and progress over time. Academic grades are determined by the following values:

Assessments will account for 70-80% of the total grade. Assessments may include exams, quizzes, performance tasks, portfolios, presentations, projects, essays, and other demonstrations of learning. The purpose of an assessment is to measure what students know at the end of a learning cycle.

Homework/Coursework will account for 20-30% of the total grade. This category may include homework, classwork, short quizzes, and other checks for understanding determined by the teacher. The purpose of a check for understanding is to measure student progress during a learning cycle.

The weighting of a grade will be consistent within each grade level, in each content area, in each middle school.

**Q. Why is assessment heavily weighted in the calculation of a grade?**

**A.** Assessment encompasses many types of evidence of student learning. It is the true indicator of the student’s mastery level of the content. Homework/Coursework is a category for items that provide information to the teacher and student about their skills while the learning cycle is in progress. This type of evidence, while important, is not a final measure of the student’s mastery and so it is not given as much weight in the final grade.

**Q. Is extra credit allowed?**

**A.** Extra credit opportunities that support student learning can encourage meaningful extensions to increase academic achievement and enhance the learning of course standards. Middle school students may be given opportunities to extend their learning and earn extra credit. Any opportunities for extra credit shall be made available to all students of a class/course. Such opportunities will be at the discretion of teaching teams and clearly communicated to all stakeholders. Teachers are not required to offer extra credit in any given course.

When offered, no more than 5% of the total academic grade can come from extra credit.

**Q. Are students going to be allowed to turn in late work without penalty?**

**A.** Students are expected to complete all required work and will be given opportunities and support to do so.

Late work is best reported/reflected in students' conduct grades. To reinforce the expectation of students submitting quality work in a timely manner, any penalties for late work indicated as part of the "academic grade" will be fixed as opposed to escalating. Such penalties are not to exceed 10% of the original value of the assignment, after grading. Reasonable support systems to help students complete late or missing work will be designated and communicated by content grade level teams.

Recognizing the importance of progressions of learning, content area teams by grade level can establish windows of opportunity for students to complete late or missing work. Content teams may choose to not accept late work the last week of any marking period to allow teachers time to complete grading and report cards. Content area teams will communicate these timelines to students and parents in course syllabi.

Assignments not completed/submitted within the timeframes established by content grade level teams will be indicated as not submitted (NS) and will remain a zero.

**Q. Are students going to be allowed to redo graded work to increase their grade?**

**A.** "Second Chance" opportunities to measure mastery or similar knowledge and skills will be permitted on designated assignments. Where second chance opportunities are available to students, students shall earn the highest mark received – less minor deductions that may be established by content area teams to encourage students to try their best on the first attempt. (Deductions are not to exceed 10% of the value of an assignment.)

To promote fair and consistent opportunities for students, content area teams by grade level will designate and communicate **which** assignments or assessments representing the most important standards and outcomes of their course, will be allowed as redos/retakes.

Students are expected to contact teacher(s) to schedule opportunities for redos/retakes.

Recognizing the importance of progressions of learning, content area teams by grade level can establish windows of opportunity for students to complete redos and retakes. Content teams may choose to not allow retakes or redos the last week of any marking period to allow teachers time to complete grading and report cards. Content area teams will communicate these timelines to students and parents in course syllabi.

Reasonable support systems to help students complete redos/retakes will be designated and communicated by content grade level teams.

**Q. How do I access information about my student's grades?**

**A.** Parents may access information about their student's grades and course assignments by logging into their ParentVUE account. To access ParentVUE, go to: SUSD website > "Parents" tab > "ParentVUE access".

ParentVUE access codes are available at schools. Please contact your student's school to receive the Parent Code. Each parent has their own unique code. The codes do not change year-to-year, so if an account was made last year, it remains ready for use this year.