



## Overview of Grading Guidelines for Middle School Students & Parents

Beginning with the 2013-14 school year, SUSD middle schools implemented district-wide grading guidelines for determining students' grades. The guidelines are intended to provide more meaningful information to understand and support student learning. Slight revisions were made to the guidelines during the 2013-14 school year. Those revisions are reflected in this overview and in the revised Middle School Grading Guidelines Handbook.

### Purpose of the Grading Guidelines:

- To promote and ensure fair, consistent and equitable grading practices across SUSD.
- To communicate student achievement in relation to learning standards.
- To identify what students have learned and how teachers will support continued progress.
- To promote rigorous learning of knowledge and skills students must know to be ready for the next level.

### Tips for Parents to Support Students:

- Maintain an open and ongoing dialogue with your child's teachers.
- Know what kind of homework/coursework is expected for each course and develop a routine for completion.
- Maintain an open dialogue about your child's academic needs and celebrate their successes.
- Regularly monitor your child's academic progress by accessing grades in ParentVUE.
- Foster a home environment that is conducive to school success.

## Guidelines for Determining Grades

(Please consult teachers' course syllabi for more information.)

**Academic grades** recorded on report cards represent a balance of students' work, reflecting students' learning and progress over time. Report cards are generated each quarter.

Academic grades on report cards are determined by the following values:

- **Homework/Coursework:** Homework, classwork, progress checks, short quizzes and other checks for understanding represent 20-30% of students' grades
- **Assessment:** Unit and course assessments, performance tasks, portfolios, presentations, projects, essays, products and other demonstrations of learning represent 70-80% of students' grades

*Note: Content area teams by grade level will establish the above values, by course. Please consult course syllabi.*

**Important:** For students eligible under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or Section 504, accommodations per the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Section 504 plan will be implemented so that students have access to the general curriculum. In addition, students receiving special education services will be allowed to demonstrate mastery using alternative methods as indicated in the IEP.

**Conduct grades** are based on student behaviors. Conduct grades and attendance are reflected in the conduct area on the SUSD report card. Teachers are to provide a conduct grade of O, S, N, or U for each student at each quarter. Indicators of N and U require a comment(s) of explanation.

Indicators for conduct include:

- O – Outstanding
- S – Satisfactory
- N – Needs Improvement
- U – Unsatisfactory

**Note:** 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.

## Guidelines for Retakes/Redos

(Please consult teachers' course syllabi for more information.)

**Best Practice Rationale:** Research indicates that high performing schools and teachers focus on students' growth and mastery and allow work and assessments to be redone. Redos and retakes are part of a system that increases academic rigor to prepare our students for the next grade level.

- Repetitive opportunities to measure mastery or similar knowledge and skills will be permitted at teacher discretion at the middle level.
- 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.
- Where second chance opportunities are available to students for important assignments or assessments, 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.)
- 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 in 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.

## Guidelines for Late Work

(Please consult teachers' course syllabi for more information.)

**Best Practice Rationale:** 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 on time, 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 and submit late 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.

## Guidelines for Extra Credit

(Please consult teachers' course syllabi for more information.)

**Best Practice Rationale:** Extra credit opportunities that support student learning are appropriate ways to encourage meaningful extensions to increase academic achievement and enhance the learning of course standards.

- 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.

Additional information to further explain the middle level guidelines (including a short video) is available electronically, in the SUSD Digital Backpack, at: <http://backpack.susd.org/>

For more information please contact your child's teacher or administrative team.