A+ Practices for Grading Students with Disabilities

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Grading Guidance

www.esc20.net/agcnetwork
LEGAL REFERENCES

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

• prohibits the discrimination on the basis of disability in programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance
### Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

- prohibits discrimination on the **basis of disability** by public entities, including public elementary and secondary school systems, regardless of receipt of federal financial assistance.

### TEC §28.021

**Student Advancement**

(a) A student may be promoted only on the basis of academic achievement or demonstrated proficiency of the subject matter of the course or grade level.

(b) In measuring the academic achievement or proficiency of a student who is dyslexic, the student’s potential for achievement or proficiency in the area must be considered.

(c) In determining promotion under Subsection (a), a school district shall consider:
   - (1) the recommendation of the student’s teacher;
   - (2) the student’s grade in each subject or course;
   - (3) the student’s score on an assessment instrument administered under Section 39.023(a), (b), or (l), to the extent applicable; and
   - (4) any other necessary academic information, as determined by the district.

(d) By the start of the school year, a district shall make public the requirements for student advancement under this section.

(e) The commissioner shall provide guidelines to districts based on best practices that a district may use when considering factors for promotion.

### TEC §28.0214

**Finality of Grade**

(a) An examination or course grade issued by a classroom teacher is final and may not be changed unless the grade is arbitrary, erroneous, or not consistent with the school district grading policy applicable to the grade, as determined by the board of trustees of the school district in which the teacher is employed.

(b) A determination by a school district board of trustees under Subsection (a) is not subject to appeal. This subsection does not prohibit an appeal related to a student’s eligibility to participate in extracurricular activities under Section 33.081.
TEC § 28.0216
District Grading Policy

1. Must require a classroom teacher to assign a grade that reflects the student’s relative mastery of an assignment;
2. May not require a classroom teacher to assign a minimum grade for an assignment without regard to the student’s quality of work; and
3. May allow a student a reasonable opportunity to make up or redo a class assignment or examination for which the student received a failing grade.

TAC § 74.26
Award of Credit

(c) Credit for courses for high school graduation may be earned only if the student received a grade which is the equivalent of 70 on a scale of 100, based upon the essential knowledge and skills for each course.

TEC § 28.022
Notice To Parent Of Unsatisfactory Performance

(a) The board of trustees of each school district shall adopt a policy that:
(1) provides for a conference between parents and teachers;
(2) requires the district, at least once every 12 weeks, to give written notice to a parent of a student’s performance in each class or subject; and
(3) requires the district, at least once every three weeks, or during the fourth week of each nine-week grading period, to give written notice to a parent or legal guardian of a student’s performance in a subject included in the foundation curriculum under section 28.002(a)(1) if the student’s performance in the subject is consistently unsatisfactory, as determined by the district.
CONFIDENTIALITY OF REPORT CARDS AND TRANSCRIPTS

What’s the big difference?

Report Card
• To parents and guardians to indicate their child’s progress or level of achievement
• MAY include information about a student’s disability, including whether the student receives special education and/or related services*

Transcript
• Informs post secondary institutions or prospective employers of a student’s credentials and academic achievements
• MAY NOT contain information disclosing students’ disabilities**
1. Communicate the achievement Status of Students to Their Parents and Others
2. Provide Information for Student Self-Evaluation
3. Select, Identify, or Group Students for Certain Educational Programs
4. Provide Incentives for Students to Learn
5. Document Students’ Performance to evaluate the Effectiveness of Instructional Programs

**Purposes of Grading**

- **Formative:**
  - The goal is to gather feedback
  - Helps guide improvements in the ongoing teaching and learning context
  - Part of the instructional process
  - Helps guide differentiated instruction
  - Should be given frequently
  - Example: Diagnostic Testing prior to instruction
  - Example: Self-Assessment
  - Example: Exit Slip
**Summative:**
- Occurs after instruction.
- Graded.
- Designed to provide information about the amount of learning that has occurred at a particular point.
- The goal is to measure the level of success or proficiency that has been obtained at the end of a unit by comparing it to some standard.
- Cumulative.
- Best when used with “chunks of learning.”
- Example: Final Project.
- Example: End of Unit Assessment.

**Formative:**
Formal and informal assessments utilized during the learning process in order to modify teaching and learning activities to improve student attainment.

**SUMMATIVE:**
Process of measuring them. It’s important to compare and analyze but in itself, doesn’t affect the growth of the plants.
AUTHORITY FOR DECISION MAKING

Who makes decisions?

• ARD committee
• Classroom Teacher
• Campus Administrator

ARD Committee

• Based on student needs
• Continuously reviews and updates based on progress and present levels.
• Ensures supports and services are faded, increased, and altered when necessary
  • FAPE
  • LRE
• Meet (if necessary) to discuss a student’s lack of progress
• Revise IEP if appropriate
ARD Committee
(makes individualized decisions for each student)

- location, duration, and frequency
- who
- accommodations, modifications, supports, and supplementary aids and services
- “how often” and “how”
- promotion/retention*
- determines modified grading policy if appropriate **

Classroom Teacher

- Reflect ARD committee decisions in day-to-day grading and instructional decisions including
  - accommodations,
  - modifications,
  - IEP goals,
  - progress monitoring, and
  - grading

Classroom Teacher (cont.)

- React quickly to low grades
Administrator
(Makes general decisions for a campus)

- “campus” grading policies
- master schedule
- implement the district’s grading
- when and how grades are reported
- how those implementing the IEP would document supports

GRADING RESPONSIBILITIES

What do you do when...?

- There is more than one adult in the classroom?

General Educator  Special Educator  Paraprofessional
• When a student fails to maintain or make progress for two consecutive reporting periods...
  – ARD committee should consider the need to meet and evaluate current supports and services that are not currently resulting in "progress."
  – This is best practice and not a requirement.
Accommodations

• Changes in how the student is accessing content and materials.

• Do not change the learning standards for the student, but allow the student to participate in and demonstrate mastery of the general curriculum.

Modifications

• Changes to the depth of what students are taught and tested.

• Change the expectation of learning.

Grading Example:

• long division
• four digit numbers by two digit numbers
• 20 word problems
• 45-minute class period
ACCOMMODATION

• Break the assignment up into smaller parts/sessions

Modification

• Complete division problems involving three digits by one-digit numbers. This student’s assessment would consist of the same problems with an altered number of digits to reflect the modification appropriately.

Or

• A student would only complete word problems involving numbers that evenly divide (no remainders).

http://tiny.cc/teagradingflowchart
Monitoring Progress vs. Issuing Grades

Two Discreet Processes
• Progress monitoring
  – Measures progress as it relates to the IEP

• Grading
  – Measures mastery as it relates to the general curriculum

4 keys to success:
• Accurate
  • Grades clearly reflect achievement on standards instead of blending them with behaviors (i.e., effort, participation, etc.)
• Meaningful
  • Communicates useful information to student and others about performance on specified learning goals
• Consistent
  • Clear performance standards and processes for grading is evident from classroom to classroom (How good is good enough?)
• Support Learning
  • Grading practices focus on quality of work, rather than quantity of points earned, and reflect student learning
A Tool:

Rubrics

- A rubric is an authentic assessment tool used to measure students' work.
- A rubric is a working guide for students and teachers, usually handed out before the assignment begins in order to get students to think about the criteria on which their work will be judged.
- Rubrics can be analytic or holistic, and they can be created for any content area including math, science, history, writing, foreign languages, drama, art, music, etc...

http://edtech.kennesaw.edu/intech/rubrics.html

Rubric Examples

- O'Connor (2007, p. 66-68)
Rubric Makers

- [http://rubistar.4teachers.org/](http://rubistar.4teachers.org/)
- [http://edtech.kennesaw.edu/intech/rubrics.htm](http://edtech.kennesaw.edu/intech/rubrics.htm)

FAQ #4. Can teachers base grades on a student’s effort, work habits, attendance, and/or participation?

As referenced in state law (TEC § 28.0216), a school district grading policy must require a classroom teacher to assign a grade that reflects the student’s relative mastery of an assignment.

Effort, attendance, work habits, and participation are not directly related to the demonstration of mastery of an assignment, nor do they give a clear picture of the student’s academic learning.
### FAQ #5. When are letter grades appropriate/not appropriate?

Letters from the Office of Civil Rights regarding Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and IDEA clarify that districts may use different grading systems for a student with a disability in the regular classroom if the systems are also available to, and used by, the general student population and if the alternative system is chosen on an individual basis by the student’s ARD committee.

Examples of grading systems included letter grades, pass/fail, and audit without credit. Alternative or modified grading is not the discretion of the classroom teacher.

For early childhood, teachers may use letter grades only when appropriate. Consider research-based, norm-referenced checklists as part of the daily routine in an early childhood setting.

### FAQ #11. Can the teacher just “adjust” or accommodate the grade on an assignment as a way of modifying?

Teachers should not use adjusted grades when a student requires accommodations and modifications that enable him or her to complete the regular education curriculum satisfactorily. (See flowchart)

### FAQ #12. Can a school have a modified “grading system” for certain programs of students such as low incidence program?

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Element</th>
<th>Weight of Grade</th>
<th>Individualized Grading Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation of Research</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tests</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classwork/Lab Work</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Objective vs. Subjective**

- Ensures LRE
- Individualized supports

**FAQ #17. Should a teacher give a zero for work that is missing or incomplete?**

- Use incomplete to denote such work
- Ensures an adequate picture of what a student does and does not know.
- Include supports for:
  - Turning in work on time
  - Completing work on time
GRADE POLLUTION

What about the ZERO?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student A</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean = 68.8%
Does this accurately reflect what the student knows and can do?

Ms. Smith’s 9th Grade Algebra Class – 1st 6 Weeks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Student A</th>
<th>Student B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HW 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HW 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiz 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HW 3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HW 4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiz 2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HW 5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HW 6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiz 3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit Test</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6 Week Avg.</strong></td>
<td>??</td>
<td>??</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Quiz = daily grade;*  
*Test = 3 daily grades*
“The use of an ‘I’ or ‘Incomplete’ grade is an alternative to assigning zeros that is both educationally sound and potentially quite effective.”

--Guskey & Bailey

Two common causes of course failures:

• 1) missing homework
• 2) poor performance on a single major assignment.

• Adjusting your policy would have a huge impact on student failures. (Reeves)
There is a belief that students perform at a failure level and submit failing work largely because teachers accept it.

DON'T LET OUR FUTURE GO UP IN SMOKE

What Teachers Can Do to Facilitate Meaningful Change

1. Implement practices guided by knowledge rather than tradition or emotion.
2. Know the difference between accommodations and modifications.
3. Think big, start small.
4. Initiate frequent, high quality communication with families.
References

References (continued)


Additional Resources

- Texas Education Agency
  http://www.tea.state.tx.us/
- Texas Project First
  http://www.texasprojectfirst.org/
- Project Forum
  http://www.projectforum.org/
- Student Attendance and Accounting Handout (SAAH)
  http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=7739&menu_id2=789
- IDEA 2004
  http://idea.ed.gov/

AGC Resources

Additional Access to the General Curriculum Documents found at:
www.esc20.net/agcnetwork

- Guidelines for Co-Teaching In Texas
- Individualized Education Program (IEP) Annual Goal Development Question and Answer Document
- Working With Paraprofessionals: A Resource for Teachers of Students with Disabilities
- Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Question and Answer Document
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