

# NEILLSVILLE MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL

## Grading For Learning Handbook



Updated: 8-16-22

Dear NMS & NHS Students and Parents,

The philosophy of the NMS and NHS staff is that grades should reflect student learning through instructive communication, not punishment; thus, the name of this handbook: “Grading 4 Learning”. The purpose of this document is to bring information to you concerning the grading policies and procedures that are utilized by our teachers.

The Neillsville Middle and High School administration and teaching staff have been discussing grading and assessment within the middle and high school buildings for many years. We can tell you that grading and assessment have changed a lot since the days when we were students ourselves. NMS and NHS have just completed our fifth year of using 40% as the lowest failing grade that a student can be given on any assessment. The change to this grading format has been challenging, but it does more accurately help to measure and determine student learning without using grades as a way to punish students for things that are not academic in nature. After a review, we will be making an adjustment to this policy; we will be allowing teachers at the middle and high school levels to issue students a “zero”. That will provide all stakeholders with a more accurate picture of a student’s academic performance and effort within the classroom. However, given the destructive nature of the zero, the lowest final course grade that can be given at the end of a quarterly grading period will remain a 40%, F.

One argument that we have heard repeatedly is that this system of grading is not helping to prepare our students for the real world, and it takes away the importance of teaching them responsibility. We will not disagree, schools should be teaching students the importance of timeliness, completing homework on time, participating in class and the skill of organization, but not through a letter grade that goes on an official transcript. Grading for Learning (G4L) has everything to do with measuring learning and not compliance.

Take for example the chart to the right. The traditional 100 point grading scale adversely punishes a student when the student is given a “zero”. In fact, the argument could be made that even at a 40% the student is being “punished” through the gradebook. The facts are indisputable; zeroes fail to accurately communicate what a student knows, has learned and is able to do. In addition, zeros have such a powerfully negative impact on a grade that they can have a debilitating effect on student confidence and motivation.

100	4
90	3
80	2
70	1
60	0
50	-1
40	-2
30	-3
20	-4
10	-5
0	-6

### Consider the Correlation

**A (0) on a 100-pt. scale is a (-6) on a 4-pt. scale. If a student does no work, he should get nothing, not something worse than nothing. How instructive is it to tell a student that he is six times less than absolute failure? Choose to be instructive, not punitive.**

[Doug Reeves, *The Learning Leader*, ASCD, 2006]

We sincerely hope this document will provide information and guidance and answer any questions you may have concerning grading practices at NMS and NHS. You will find these policies and procedures woven into the syllabi students will be receiving from their classroom teachers during the first days of school. Please keep it as a reference. If, while reading this document, you have a question that remains unanswered, please do not hesitate to contact Mrs. Poeschel in the middle school office or Mr. Anderson in the high school office.

Sincerely,  
Neillsville Middle & High School Administration and Teaching Staff

## 1. GRADING SCALE

Below is the grading scale used at Neillsville Middle & High School. You may see this system when checking a student grade in a particular class in *Infinite Campus* or on a school issued report card.

### Percentage Scoring

<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Percentage Score</u>
A	93 - 100
A-	90 - 92
B+	87 - 89
B	83 - 86
B-	80 - 82
C+	77 - 79
C	73 - 76
C-	70 - 72
D+	67 - 69
D	63 - 66
D-	60 - 62
F	59 - 0

\*Please note: the lowest "F" possible as a quarterly grade is a 40%.

## 2. GRADING PERIODS OR TERMS

Grading periods, or terms, are used to serve as timelines when grades are posted for students. The grading periods for middle and high school students are as follows:

### For nine-week classes (used only in middle school classes):

- 9-week grade – this grade will be a final grade as these courses meet for only 9-weeks.

### For semester classes:

- 9-week – the grade reported at this time will be to inform students and parents of student progress and will be used for honor roll purposes.
- 18-week/semester – the grade reported at this time will be a grade of record that is recorded on a student's transcript and will be used in determining grade point average.

### For yearlong classes:

- 9-week/end of 1st quarter - the grade reported at this time will be to inform students and parents of student progress and will be used for honor roll purposes.
- 18-week/end of 1st semester – the grade reported at this time will be a grade of record that is recorded on a student's transcript and will be used in determining grade point average.
- 27-week/end of 3rd quarter – same as a 9-week grade.
- 36-week/end of 2nd semester – same as an 18-week grade.

### 3. **FORMATIVE and SUMMATIVE GRADING**

What is the difference between formative and summative assessment?

**Formative Assessment** (ie. Practice work and skill development)

Formative assessments are generally *low stakes*, which means that they have low or, in some cases, no point value. The goal of formative assessment is to *monitor student learning* to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by instructors to improve their teaching and by students to improve their learning. Formative assessments include:

- daily homework assignments
- study guides
- quizzes
- “rough drafts”
- journals
- many other “practice” items

**Summative Assessment** (ie. Mastery of skills and Essential Learning Targets)

The goal of summative assessment is to *evaluate student learning* at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against some standard or benchmark. Summative assessments are often *high stakes*, which means that they have a high point value. Examples of summative assessments may include:

- tests and exams
- major projects
- research papers
- major essays
- presentations
- performances
- anything that a teacher may use to make a judgment of a student’s ability level or their mastery of curriculum and content

Neillsville Middle & High School teachers are required to grade students based upon the following criteria:

- A minimum of 70% of a student’s final course grade will be measured using summative assessments
- A maximum of 30% of a student’s final course grade may be measured using formative assessments

**\*Note:** Teachers may request that the summative assessment percentage be increased; this would in turn change the percentage given to formative work in the class as well.

### 4. **DUE DATES & DEADLINES**

Establishing, maintaining, and holding students accountable for due dates and deadlines is necessary to assist students in the development of skills such as organization, time management, problem solving and collaboration as well as in the development of individual responsibility and self-discipline. In addition, establishing, maintaining, and holding students accountable for due dates and deadlines are also necessary for teachers to adequately and efficiently manage their workload. The staff has determined the following:

- The due date is the date upon which the assignment is expected to be submitted to the teacher in complete and final format.
- Missing work will be recorded with a “M” which calculates as a zero until a final grade is

determined and then recorded.

- Work that is turned in late may be penalized by a reduction of a letter grade.
- Of course, there is a good deal of teacher discretion that may be applied. In unusual circumstances, due dates may be extended and/or grading adjustments may not be necessary. Students need to be encouraged to discuss unusual or extenuating circumstances directly with teachers – learning and practicing good communication skills. However, more stringent sanctions, such as additional grade penalties for late work, are not appropriate.

## **5. RETAKE OF SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS**

All teachers at Neillsville Middle and High School are to allow students the opportunity for retakes of summative assessments based upon the following points:

- All students will be allowed one attempted retake per summative test. One retake opportunity is the norm. In unique and unusual circumstances, an additional retake opportunity may be provided at the teacher’s discretion.
- Retakes on summative assessment will fall under one of two scenarios:
  1. Students who have completed the required formative work (readings, in-class assignments, homework assignments, quizzes, etc.) prior to the date of the summative test, will be eligible to retake the assessment if needed. The higher of the two scores will be recorded and used for grading purposes.
  2. Students who did not complete the required formative work (readings, in-class assignments, homework assignments, quizzes, etc.) may be eligible to retake the assessment. Any student wishing to have a summative assessment retake opportunity must complete all of the teacher required practice work prior to the date of the retake.
- Students must complete the retake process prior to the date of the next unit summative test.
- The summative retake process does not apply to all types of summative assessments including long term, multi-step assessments such as a research paper, project or presentation. (In many of these cases, such as a research paper, students receive feedback on each step of the process and have multiple opportunities to redo portions of the paper or project before final submission.)
- Summative retake opportunities are **not** available for semester or final course exams.

## **6. INCOMPLETE GRADES**

Board Policy states that any grade recorded at the end of a marking period (Quarter or Semester) is to be changed no later than two weeks (10 days; Monday-Friday) after the grading period is completed.

“I” (Incomplete). This mark is normally used for students who have had excused absences at the end of the marking period and have not had sufficient time to make up work necessary to receive a grade. Normally, incompletes must be made up within two weeks (10 calendar days) after the end of the semester. Make-up work in case of extended absences due to illness will be given special consideration proportionate to the length of the illness.

- Students needing additional time to complete assessments need to be encouraged to discuss and make arrangements (plans to complete the work) directly with their teacher – learning and practicing good communication skills. An “incomplete” may then be assigned.

- Following the 10-day period, the student’s progress toward completion will be assessed and a final grade must be assigned.
- In cases of error, miscalculation, submission of completed work, a teacher may, at their discretion, modify a grade utilizing established building procedures after the final grade has been submitted.

## 7. **“EXTRA CREDIT”**

Extra credit is not allowed to be entered as a part of a student’s academic classroom grade. Extra credit artificially inflates grades, and in doing so, does not accurately measure what a student knows and can do within the provided curriculum.

Statement from the Principals:

We would like to thank all the members of the NMS and NHS teaching staff for their time, knowledge and support of this grading policy. The debate over what determines a grade is as old as education itself. There is no right or wrong answer, but there are plenty of opinions on the matter. We can simply tell you that based upon years of research and professional discussion, we believe that this system of grading within our middle and high school buildings will more accurately measure what students know and can do. Our community has an expectation that we will provide a high-quality education to all students and do what we can to most accurately provide information, through grades, that will most accurately show how well we have done our job.

Education is changing and that requires us all to be open-minded when changes occur. School and learning are different from when most adults like me were in school. We will be continuing to evaluate and change our practices based upon the latest research into best practices. As those changes occur we will do our best to keep you informed of these changes. To us it’s quite simple, grading should be used to measure learning not compliance. We have included a “character” side of our report card to better inform students and parents of the soft skills that can impact student learning such as: completing homework on time, coming to class prepared, is a participant in class discussions, etc. At the beginning of each school year or, for one-semester courses, classroom teachers will disseminate and discuss grading policies and procedures with their specific course syllabi. Students and parents are asked to carefully review these expectations and are encouraged to address specific questions with the respective teacher.

If you have any questions regarding this handbook please contact the appropriate building level principal for your student.

Respectfully,  
Mrs. Poeschel, Middle School Principal  
Mr. Anderson, High School Principal

## Neillsville MS/HS Grading Guidelines

**Purpose of Grading: To communicate and enhance student learning and knowledge**  
***Ultimate Goal = Student Learning***

<b>Grading Formation</b>	<b>Late Work</b>	<b>Retakes/Redos</b>	<b>Practice (Classwork/Homework)</b>	<b>Extra Credit</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use various types of assessments</li> <li>● Based on Essential Learning Targets (ELTs)</li> <li>● Use district-defined grading scale</li> <li>● Formative Assessment will count as a maximum of 30% of final grade</li> <li>● Summative Assessment will count as a minimum of 70% of final grade</li> <li>● Lowest recorded final quarterly grade a student can earn is a 40%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Missing work should be recorded with a "M" which calculates as a zero.</li> <li>● Late work may be penalized by a letter grade reduction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Give an option for retakes on formative and summative assessments</li> <li>● Provide a re-teaching opportunity prior to offering a retakes</li> <li>● Provide retakes on ELTs not mastered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Purposeful</li> <li>● Linked to ELTs</li> <li>● Not busywork</li> <li>● Able to do on their own</li> <li>● Differentiate for ability</li> <li>● Use to guide student learning and plan instruction</li> <li>● Up to 30% of overall grade</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Extra Credit is not best practice and therefore, is not offered</li> <li>● Retake procedures have replaced the need for extra credit</li> </ul>

**Formative Assessment** - Assessments that provide critical feedback to the student, teacher and parent on the student learning process to guide further instruction. *Examples of formative assessments might be daily work, homework, and teacher observations of essential learning targets.*

**Summative Assessment** - Assessments given to students to demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have acquired as the result of instruction and practice. These demonstrations usually occur toward the end of a unit, a course, or a grading period. *Examples of summative assessments might be test, written compositions, projects, or performance assessments.*