

Dayton Independent Schools

School board grading policy research brief & Proposal

Current state of policy

Dayton Independent Schools currently has in place a grading scale that varies from 6 points at the A and D grade bands to 8 points at the B and C grade bands. The breakdown of the current grading scale, as listed in the student handbook, is as follows:

A = 94-100

B = 85-93

C = 76-84

D = 70-75

Regional comparisons

All Kenton County schools currently utilize a 10-point grading scale. Several other districts in the state are considering whether to adopt a 10-point grading scale, according to published stakeholder surveys and board minutes available online.

National comparisons

In the past 5 years, several state boards of education have chosen to mandate a 10-point grading scale state-wide, in order to improve continuity of students transitioning between districts in the state, as well as to level the playing field for students across the state who are competing for college admissions and scholarship opportunities. These states include Arkansas, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Florida.

33 out of the top 45 high schools in the U.S. currently use the 10 point scale.

The U.S. Department of Education reports that the 10-point grading scale is currently the most frequently utilized scale nationwide.

Potential concerns

Potential concerns of other districts who have considered/are considering altering their grading scale to a 10-point system essentially center around the perceived appearance of lowering standards for students. However, it should be noted that only individual classroom practices, not district-wide grading scale adoption, could be responsible for lowering academic expectations. In fact, the high school SBDM council chose to adopt a new uniform grading policy in August that has increased rigor and accountability (70% Summative assessments, 30% formative assessments), while moving us closer to current best practices of standards-based grading models.

Potential benefits

The potential benefits of moving to a 10-point grading scale are many. Most importantly, it is in the best interest of students-particularly students "at the edges" of the current scale.

Students at the upper end of the grading scale are being put at a disadvantage when applying for merit-based scholarships and admission to college honors programs, due to being in direct competition with students whose schools currently use a 10-point scale. In addition, all college-bound students from Dayton Schools are losing valuable

KEES money, currently tied to letter grades and GPA. Students from schools using a 10-point scale are currently receiving top funding for a course grade of 90 or above, while our students must receive a 94 to gain that same funding. Dayton students applying to colleges are competing for admission with students whose GPA is based on a 10-point scale, and will come up short even though their course percentage grades may be higher (i.e., a 90% from a school with a 10-point scale would calculate into GPA as a 4.0, while a 93% at Dayton will only count as a 3.0). KHEAA and KDE have been contacted, and have reported that there are no potential issues at the state level should Dayton choose to move to a 10-point scale. These agencies reported that they view this as a local decision.

Students at the lower end of the grading scale also benefit from a 10-point scale through higher pass rates (for high school credits) and higher graduation rates. Currently, a Dayton student who earns a 69% in a given course will not receive credit for that course. However, a student at another area school that uses a 10-point scale will receive high school credit for a 60% in the same course. Dayton Schools already require more credits for graduation than most surrounding districts, and more than required by the Kentucky Department of Education (22). By also requiring a higher percentage to gain credit for courses, we are putting at-risk students at a double disadvantage with regard to graduating.

Research findings

*The top four factors in the admission process nationwide are (in order): grades in college preparatory courses, strength of curriculum, standardized admission test scores, and overall **high school grade point average** (The National Association for College Admission Counseling, 2007).

*Betts and Grogger (2003) found that higher grading standards had no significant effect on educational attainment for most students (i.e., high school graduation rates and college attendance). However, the researchers found that **higher grading standards had a negative effect** on the graduation rates for poor, black, and Hispanic students.

Proposal

The Dayton High School SBDM Council respectfully requests that the Board of Education vote to adopt a 10-point grading scale, effective immediately.

Proposed Grading Scale:

- A 90-100
- B 80-89
- C 70-79
- D 60-69
- F below 60