

# Consistent Grading Practices FAQ

**The Pittsford Central School District** Grading Philosophy supports [practices](#) that result in grades that are meaningful, accurate, consistent, and supportive of learning. After several years of providing opportunities for teachers to learn more about the Grading Philosophy and associated practices, there are three practices that all teachers are expected to follow. These three practices represent important steps in a continuing journey to achieve our goal of implementing more equitable grading practices, district-wide, that align with the Belief Statements in [our Grading Philosophy](#).

**Here are answers to frequently asked questions about the three established practices.**

## ***What are the agreed upon grading practices to be followed by all secondary teachers?***

The three specific practices that have been agreed upon as expected common practice are:

- no extra-credit will be awarded.
- no grade representing anything lower than a 50% will be calculated into a student's quarterly average.
- student learning behaviors are to be reported separately from academic grades, and therefore should not be included in the academic grades.

## ***How were these decisions made? Who made them?***

Since the adoption of the Grading Philosophy by the Instructional Leadership Council (ILC) in 2014, there have been numerous committees that have come together over the years to advise on shared grading practices. During the 2017-18 school year, a subcommittee comprised of ILC and Secondary Academic Council members worked together on the first two practices which were implemented beginning with the 2018-19 academic year. During the 2022-23 school year, another committee was formed for the purposes of reviewing those practices including any unintended consequences, recommending necessary systems or structures needed to support the meaningful implementation of those practices, and recommending any next steps in our journey towards more equitable grading practices. An outcome of that committee's work was the recognition of the need to create a system that allows secondary teachers to report on student learning behaviors in a way that is consistent, meaningful, and manageable. A representative group of 30 teachers, counselors, administrators, and parents came together in the fall of 2023 to put that system into place which has led to the third agreed upon practice.

Please refer to the full **PCSD Grading Practices** documents for additional information about each of these three practices.

## **NO EXTRA CREDIT WILL BE AWARDED**

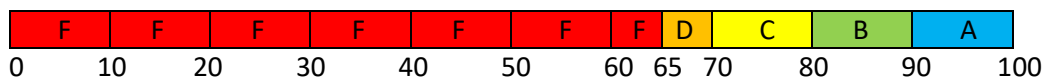
### ***Why was the decision made to not allow extra-credit?***

We believe that grades should reflect [progress toward learning standards](#). Extra-credit not only inflates grades, but results in grades which are no longer exclusively reflective of progress toward learning standards. Please refer to the PCSD Grading Practices document for more information about what is, and is not, considered extra-credit.

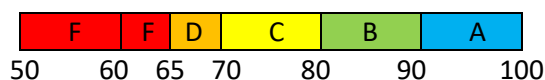
## NO GRADE REPRESENTING ANYTHING LOWER THAN A 50% WILL BE CALCULATED INTO A STUDENT'S QUARTERLY AVERAGE

### ***Why did we decide to not allow any grade below a 50 to be calculated into the quarterly average?***

We believe that grading practices should be set up to support student motivation to learn. Our intention is to avoid having any one grade on an assignment have a disproportionate impact on the student's grade, while we also acknowledge the need to communicate when a student has failed. Limiting "failing" grades to scores between 50%-64% strikes the balance between communicating a failure while still giving the student the opportunity to recover through continued efforts at learning. Consider the fact that in the traditional 0 to 100 grading scale, there are 64 degrees of failure, compared with 36 degrees of passing:



Our goal is to come closer to a more proportionate grade distribution:



### ***What does this mean for me if I use a cumulative point system for my gradebook, rather than a percentage system?***

If you grade using cumulative points, at the end of the marking period you will need to reconcile any score that represents less than 50% of the possible number of points for that particular assignment up to a score representing 50%. For example, if an assignment/assessment was worth a possible 40 points and a student only scored 15/40 points on that assignment, at the end of the marking period, the 15 would need to be adjusted up to a 20/40.

### ***What does this mean for me if I use a rubric (1-4, 1-5, or other) for my gradebook?***

If you grade with a rubric scoring, you should set the Assignment Mark conversion tables with 1=50% (or higher). This way, no score in your grade book would ever convert to less than 50% when you post your end-of-quarter grades.

### ***Does this mean we are not allowed to enter a "0" into our grade books?***

No. A teacher may enter a "0-49%" into the grade book, but at the end of the marking period, before grades are posted, any "0-49%" in the grade book must be converted to a "50%", excluded from the quarterly grade calculation, or converted to an INC.

### ***Will Infinite Campus automatically convert any score under 50 at the end of the marking period?***

No. Unfortunately, Infinite Campus is not able to automatically change any score under a 50% to a 50% at the end of the marking period. Teachers will need to make these adjustments manually before doing their final grade calculations. Teachers do have the ability to make any failing score show up in red, which will help you to more quickly identify the marks below 50%.

**How do I determine which assignments result in an INC being recorded as the grade for a marking period?**

Only those tasks considered essential should, if not completed, result in an INCOMPLETE on a student's quarterly report card grade. Other tasks, while important for learning, if not completed should not result in an INC on the report card. Teachers should mark the **Learning Behavior: Meets learning task deadlines** appropriately to indicate that the student is not following through on all assignments. The chart, below, has been developed to help guide teachers' thinking around tasks that, if not completed, could result in an INC for a marking period.

Ideally, Essential Tasks are ones that are agreed upon by all teachers of the same course, rather than decided upon by individual teachers. Recognizing that there is work to be done to bring about this level of "per course" agreement, as of this writing plans are in the works to devote the necessary time and resources to this important work.

Nothing about this chart should be interpreted to mean that non-Essential Tasks do not provide important learning experiences for students. These are important and valuable learning experiences that build students' academic knowledge and skills, leading them to success on Essential Tasks. This chart is intended to communicate only that the failure by a student to complete a task(s) designated as non-essential should not result in an INC as a quarterly grade.

Criteria*	An assignment/task IS essential ...	An assignment/task is NOT essential...
<b>Purpose</b>	...if it is summative by design.	...if it is formative by design.
<b>Wholistic</b>	...if it was designed to provide evidence (summative) that a student has reached proficiency on a set of standards, skills, or learning targets at the conclusion of a unit of instruction.	...if it was intended to give student a chance to practice a skill (formative) that they would later be assessed on in a more wholistic or comprehensive manner.
<b>Critical</b>	...if the learning measured by the task is critical to the student's ability to succeed in the next step of the learning journey AND that learning will not be assessed, later on.	...if the learning measured by the task is not critical to the student's ability to succeed in the next steps of their learning journey OR the learning measured by the task, will be assessed again at a later time.
<b>District-wide expectation</b>	...if it is a district-wide agreed upon assessment embedded in curriculum/instructional roadmaps.	
<b>State required</b>	...if it is tied to a lab experience required by New York State in order to be eligible to sit for the associated Regents exam or earn credit for the course.	
<b>Student Compliance</b>		...simply because it was assigned.

**\*an individual task need only meet one of the listed criteria in order to be considered essential.**

**What are the different "placeholders" in the Infinite Campus gradebook and what is the impact of using each of them?**

**"M" for Missing:** This will calculate as a "0" in the rolling average. Since no grade lower than a 50% will ultimately be calculated in the quarterly average, it is important to understand using M will result in a rolling average that may temporarily be lower than the final reported quarterly grade IF the missing

assignment is one that will be calculated into the quarterly grade. The M will need to be adjusted, by the teacher, to either a 50% or an INC if it is an Essential Task, before the quarterly grades are reported.

**“INC” for Incomplete:** Since an INC entered for an individual assignment will not be calculated in the rolling average, the rolling average may not accurately reflect what the quarterly average grade will be. A student who has failed to complete essential assignments may have INC recorded for their quarterly grade until those assignments are turned in.

**Leave the grade blank:** This will carry the same implications as the INC, in terms of its impact on the rolling average.

### ***What is the problem with giving students a “0” when they have failed to complete an assignment?***

The practice of using zeros for an incomplete assignment violates the principles of sound assessment by assigning a value to work that the teacher has not seen. On a 100- point scale, a 0 can have a devastating effect on a student’s average, serving to de-motivate students to the point where they won’t bother to do the work because failure is inevitable. If a student fails to complete an assignment, our goal is for the student to complete that assignment. The most important outcome for not doing the work should be to do the work.

### ***What if a student scores below 50% on a local final exam or assessment?***

No grade lower than a 50% should be used as part of a student’s grade calculation; this includes final exam scores used for grade calculations. If a student scores lower than a 50% on a final exam used for grade calculation(s), the score must be adjusted to a 50%. Additionally, a comment must be made that includes the actual score on the exam so that the student, and parents, are provided with that information. As a reminder, Regents exam scores must be reported on the transcript as they are received and they are not calculated into the final grade for the course.

### ***If a student has a grade below a 50%, why should I raise that grade to 50%? Isn’t that just giving away points?***

Adjusting a failing grade up to 50% is still assigning it a failing grade, but it puts the student in a place where, mathematically, they can recover and therefore are more likely to continue to be motivated to learn and put forth the effort to meet the standards for the course.

### ***Can an INC be given if a student fails an assessment with a score below 50% (instead of converting the lower score to a 50 when calculating the marking period grade)?***

An “INC” is intended to communicate a lack of evidence and should not be used to replace a failing grade. If a student has made a genuine attempt to complete an Essential Task but, in doing so, has provided evidence that they have not learned the material at a level that would earn them a passing grade, that is still evidence and therefore should not be recorded as an “INC”. Teachers are encouraged (but not required) to provide students with additional opportunities to learn and to re-assess to demonstrate proficiency. If, however, a student chooses not to re-assess, the original grade (below a 50%) should remain notated in the gradebook but should be re-set to a 50% for the purposes of calculating the quarterly grade.

### ***What do I do if a student cheats on an assignment?***

If a student cheats, use one of the “placeholders” in your gradebook until the student satisfactorily and honestly completes the assignment. The student must be expected to re-do the assignment (or complete an alternative assignment/assessment at the discretion of the teacher) in order to demonstrate their learning. Work with your building administrator regarding the appropriate consequences for the negative behavior of cheating. Consequences for violation of the Academic Honesty policy are outlined in the Student Handbook and are reviewed with students annually.

### ***What do I do if a student simply refuses to do an assignment, or multiple assignments?***

There are many reasons why a student may fail to complete an assignment, or multiple assignments. If a student refuses to do an assignment, use one of the “placeholders” in your gradebook until the student satisfactorily completes the assignment. If an assignment is essential it needs to be completed, therefore the outcome of not doing the assignment should include doing the assignment. If, after notifying the student that they are missing an essential assignment, the assignment has still not been submitted after one week, the teacher and student should work together to make a plan to resolve the missing assignment within a reasonable timeframe. The teacher should notify the parent/guardian of the plan for the student to resolve their missing work. If the work continues to be unresolved after the agreed-upon timeframe, the teacher completes an Academic Concerns Referral. Please see the complete flowchart for more specific information about resolving missing essential assignments at this link: [filedownload.ashx \(pittsfordschools.org\)](filedownload.ashx(pittsfordschools.org))

It may also be appropriate to involve the student’s counselor, or the building IST, for assistance in addressing these issues. Students who do not complete assignments because of an academic skill issue need the opportunity for more teaching and learning to take place in order to build their competence to the point that they are able to complete the assignments.

Please refer to the [“Resolving Essential Missing Assignments”](#) flowchart that has been developed to guide teachers and students through the necessary process of resolving incomplete [Essential Tasks](#).

In addition, if a student demonstrates a pattern of not completing assignments, this should be reflected in the “learning behaviors” portion of their report card.

### ***How will we handle students that determine they can do nothing for the next 2 marking periods and still pass the course?***

Students who fail to complete essential learning for the course, as demonstrated by the Essential Tasks, will receive an INC for the quarter grade (no credit) until they complete those essential learning tasks. Please refer to the [“Resolving Essential Missing Assignments”](#) flowchart that has been developed to guide teachers and students through the necessary process of resolving incomplete Essential Tasks. Teachers, administrators, and counselors should work together to determine the appropriate outcome for any student with one or more quarterly grades of INC in a course at the conclusion of the academic year.

In addition, if a student demonstrates a pattern of not completing assignments, this should be reflected in the “learning behaviors” portion of their report card.

### ***Will the practice of not allowing any grade under 50% to be calculated into a student’s quarterly average impact a student’s ability to be considered for special education services?***

Consistency among teachers in adhering to grading practices helps all stakeholders better understand what an individual student's grades actually represent in terms of their learning. A student's grades are only one data point used by building PSTs and CSEs in determining a student's eligibility for services. Many other aspects of a student's performance are carefully considered in weighing these decisions. Any failing grade, no matter what its numeric equivalency, is considered a red-flag and a cause for concern. Therefore, we do not anticipate any negative impact of this practice on our PST or CSE processes and decisions.

***Why don't we just get rid of the 100-point scale and move to a 1-5 scale, or something similar? Wouldn't that fix a lot of problems?***

It may be true that using a 1-5 grading scale to report on student learning would resolve some of the challenges we are currently experiencing as we work to align grading practices with our Grading Philosophy. There are, however, other unintended consequences to making this kind of change and we need time to consider all the potential ramifications. We will continue to look at this idea with our various stakeholder groups including teachers, parents, students, college admission offices, scholarship programs, and others.

**STUDENT LEARNING BEHAVIORS ARE TO BE REPORTED SEPARATELY FROM ACADEMIC GRADES, NOT INCLUDED IN THE ACADEMIC GRADES. (new for the 2024-25 school year)**

***What was the charge of the committee that selected these four learning behaviors?***

The committee was charged with developing a system that allows secondary teachers to report on student learning behaviors in a way that is ***consistent, meaningful, and manageable***.

Since the inception of the PCSD Grading Philosophy in 2017, we have had a shared understanding that grades should reflect a student's individual academic achievement. Learning behaviors are important, but they should be reflected separately, not in an individual's academic grade. However, up until now, we have not provided teachers with a consistent, meaningful, and manageable way to report on those learning behaviors. The charge of this committee was to remedy that by providing such a system.

***Why are teachers being asked to report on learning behaviors?***

Since behaviors should not be conflated with, or influence, a student's academic grade (positively or negatively), it is important to provide a mechanism for teachers to consistently share information about critical learning behaviors, separate from the academic grade.

Reporting on student learning behaviors, separately from academic progress, provides a more complete picture of each student as a learner. The learning behaviors that have been identified are behaviors that teachers experience as typically, but not always, having a direct impact on a student's academic performance. These behaviors represent skills and dispositions important for success post high school. Students who consistently demonstrate these behaviors tend to perform better on academic tasks while students who inconsistently, or rarely, demonstrate these behaviors tend to also struggle with demonstrating mastery of the academic content. However, this is not always the case. We all know students who consistently demonstrate all these behaviors but continue to struggle with the academic content. Likewise, we know students who do not consistently demonstrate these behaviors but perform well on any summative assessment put in front of them. There are students who demonstrate these behaviors consistently in some academic settings and not in others. All these students are communicating something different through the combination of their learning behaviors and academic grades and it's our responsibility as educators to

understand, and respond appropriately, to each of their stories. Without the consistent information about learning behaviors, we only have partial information about each student as a learner.

### **What are the four learning behaviors all teachers are expected to report on?**

The four learning behaviors, with some examples of what each behavior might look like, are:

#### **Is prepared for learning**

Being prepared for learning includes, but is not limited to:

- *Coming to class with expected materials including, if required, a charged laptop*
- *Being in class, on time, ready for learning*
- *Coming to class having attempted the expected practice or pre-learning activities*

#### **Engages in classroom learning experiences**

Engaging in classroom learning experiences includes, but is not limited to:

- *Attempting the learning tasks presented by the teacher*
- *Communicating and collaborating with peers at appropriate times and in appropriate ways to foster learning and understanding*
- *Proactively seeking clarification and/or asking questions relative to the work*
- *Making relevant and substantive contributions to the learning environment*

#### **Meets learning task deadlines**

Meeting learning task deadlines includes but is not limited to:

- *Submitting assignments on or before the established due date, if one is given*
  - *When necessary, due to individual circumstances, the teacher and student may agree upon an extended due date by which the assignment needs to be completed and turned in*
- *Completing in-class assignments or tasks within a reasonable time frame so that learning can proceed*

#### **Utilizes opportunities for feedback, reflection, and growth**

Evidence of engaging in these behaviors would include, but not be limited to:

- *Responding productively to opportunities to provide and receive feedback*
- *Demonstrating a willingness to learn from mistakes to improve upon performance*
- *Taking advantage of opportunities offered to re-assess or re-do an assignment after demonstrating that additional attempts at learning have taken place*
- *Reflecting on learning experiences and making necessary adjustments to enhance future learning*
- *The ability to recognize personal strengths and challenges and set reasonable goals to guide improvement*

The examples given are not intended to be all encompassing. Individual teachers will be responsible for describing the specific expectations for these behaviors within their classroom.

### **What scale is being used to report on these behaviors?**

Teachers will report the degree to which each student demonstrate the behavior:

**Consistently** – the student demonstrates this behavior most of the time; the pattern established is one of consistency (not necessarily perfection); as the teacher you can pretty much count on the student to display this behavior;

**Inconsistently** – the student is just as likely to demonstrate this behavior as not; the pattern established is one of inconsistency; as the teacher you are unable to predict whether on any given day the student will successfully display this behavior or not;

**Rarely** – the student almost never displays this behavior.

In some specific instances, N/A will be available as a mark for the behavior **Meets Learning Task Deadlines**.

***Am I expected to quantify these behaviors in some way in order to justify the mark I use to report on each behavior?***

No. We are not asking, or expecting, teachers to create a data-tracking system for each of these behaviors for every student. You may already have systems in place that help you keep track of, for example, the frequency with which students meet learning task deadlines. If so, you are welcome to continue using those systems to inform your marking of the learning behaviors. However, the committee members felt that teachers should readily be able to report on each of these four behaviors, accurately, using the scale provided based on daily interactions with the students.

***I have been incorporating some of these behaviors, or lack thereof, into my academic grades by doing things like taking points off for late work or giving points for active participation in class discussions. Can I still do that?***

No. Learning behaviors are important, but they are separate and different from academic grades. Your academic grades should represent a student's progress toward meeting academic standards and should not be reflective of learning behaviors.

***I have 100 (or more) students on my roster. Won't reporting on four learning behaviors for all those students take a lot of time?***

The actual mechanics of including this information on the report card in Infinite Campus are simple and streamlined. For each section of students rostered to you, you will be able to see all their names along with all four learning behaviors. From a drop-down menu at the top of the screen, you will select "All Standards and Grading Tasks". You will then be able to select "Fill Percent, Grade, Comment" and from there you will be able to select to "fill all" learning behaviors for all students on that roster with the descriptor "Consistently". At that point, you will then be able to go back and change "Consistently" to "Inconsistently" or "Rarely" as appropriate for any student, any learning behavior. This video link demonstrates the process from start to finish: [ScreenCapture\\_1-5-2024\\_9.18.35 AM.wmv](#)

Training will be provided as part of the annual Infinite Campus refreshers in August, as well as at faculty meetings in the fall. Documentation, including screen shots of each step of the process will also be prepared and made available to staff.

We estimate that the process should only take a few minutes per roster, less time than it takes now to choose, or write, individual comments for students.



***I've always used comments to report on student learning behaviors. Why do we need a different method than that?***

Many teachers, especially at the middle school, have consistently used comments to share information about a student's learning behaviors, as well as additional information pertaining to their academic progress. However, the work of our committee revealed that not all teachers used comments consistently, and the comments being used are not necessarily providing formative feedback on a student's learning behaviors. With a bank of over 350 canned comments to choose from, it's easy to see how relying on comments to provide information about student learning behavior is anything but consistent in terms of the information being shared. By expecting all teachers to report on the same four learning behaviors, we will have consistent information about students that can be tracked over time, across subject areas, and responded to appropriately.

***Who will be able to see the learning behavior information?***

Students, parents/guardians, teachers, counselors, administrators, and anyone in the building with access to a student's report card will be able to see the learning behavior feedback. This should allow this information to be used by the student and their parent/guardian as positive reinforcement or for discussions about strategies for improvement. Teachers, counselors, and administrators, as well as IST and PST teams, will be able to see, and respond to, patterns of behavior across subject areas.

The information about learning behaviors will NOT appear on a student's transcript so it will not be shared by school personnel as part of the college and/or scholarship application process.

***Are teachers expected to use other additional means of communication if they have concerns about a student's learning behaviors?***

Just as parents should not be learning of a poor academic grade for the first time when they look at their child's quarterly report card, they should also not learn of poor learning behaviors for the first time from a report card. Particularly if a student **rarely** demonstrates one of the four reported on behaviors, the teacher should be contacting home to express concerns and discuss potential remedies before marking the report card with **Rarely**.

***How often, and when, are teachers expected to report on student learning behaviors?***

Teachers will report on all four learning behaviors for every student on their roster each quarter as part of the quarterly report card.

If teachers are required, or desire, to provide a 5-week interim report, that 5-week interim report can be an academic grade OR learning behavior feedback OR both.

***Am I also required to include comments about the learning behaviors?***

No. The learning behavior marks should be able to stand alone and will not require a comment. Our goal is to create a system that is manageable; requiring comments would mean double-work and would be anything BUT manageable.

## ***Am I allowed to include comments about the learning behaviors, if I choose to do so?***

Yes. Teachers can choose to include comments about learning behaviors if they feel it is important to do so. For each learning behavior mark in IC, there is a place where a comment about that specific behavior can be included, if desired. (see below)

Students	Percent	Grade	Posted	
			Report Card Comments	Canned Comment
[Student Icon]	<input type="text"/>	Co	[Yellow Highlighted Box]	Manage
12 [Student Icon]	<input type="text"/>	Co	<input type="text"/>	Manage
12 [Student Icon]	<input type="text"/>	Co	<input type="text"/>	Manage

## ***What about comments pertaining to academic grades?***

Teachers still have the ability to include comments on the report card specific to a student's academic grade, but those comments should be associated with the academic grade, not with any of the learning behaviors.

## ***Will we still have access to canned comments about either academic progress or learning behaviors?***

Canned comments will continue to be available as one way to make the inclusion of comments manageable. However, the bank of canned comments will be significantly reduced from the current 350 comments to a more reasonable number.

## ***What if a student's behaviors change over time?***

Each marking period should be treated separately and independently for the purpose of reporting student learning behaviors. While we recognize that the mere act of reporting information about student learning behaviors does not necessarily lead to a change in those behaviors, we would certainly want to acknowledge if a student progressed from demonstrating one or more behaviors "inconsistently" or "rarely" in one marking period to "consistently" in the next. Likewise, a student who starts the year strong in terms of these behaviors may slip later in the year. That information needs to be shared. Each quarter stands alone, and teachers should report their observations for each marking period independently of the previous marking periods.

## ***Which teachers are expected to report on student learning behaviors?***

All teachers, grades 6-12, are expected to report on student learning behaviors. This includes all classroom teachers as well as certificated teachers of the following support services:

- Math AIS/Math Support
- Literacy Support
- ENL stand-alone sections
- Instructional Challenge

At this time, students will not receive Learning Behaviors feedback on the quarterly report cards from Resource Room/Core support teachers or 504 teachers as these learning behaviors overlap with skills reflected in IEP goals/504 plans and are therefore reported on in different ways.

***How will students know about these behaviors and that they are now being reported on their report card?***

Information will be shared with students, as well as parents/guardians as part of the regular communication that goes home to families before the start of the school year. Additional information will be shared with students at each of the grade level assemblies that take place during the first week of the school year. Teachers should also plan to share with their students what their expectations of the four learning behaviors are, specifically for their class.

***How will parents know about these behaviors and that they are now being reported on their report card?***

Information will be shared with parents/guardians as part of the regular communication that goes home to families before the start of the school year. Documentation about the reporting of student learning behaviors is being prepared to be shared with parents, including a parent version of an FAQ document, similar to this one prepared for teachers. District personnel will make themselves available to speak at PTSA meetings, or similar functions, to discuss research based equitable grading practices embraced in Pittsford, including the separate reporting of student learning behaviors. Teachers should also be prepared to share with parents what these behaviors look like, specifically, in their classroom setting. This information could, for example, be included in a written syllabus provided at Open House.

***How were these four behaviors, among all the behaviors students might or might not display, chosen?***

The Grading ad hoc committee that met during the 2023-24 school year came to consensus on these four behaviors after much discussion. The committee agreed that these behaviors are observable, and directly aligned to students' academic progress. The behaviors also felt broad enough to apply across all academic settings. They are behaviors that the committee felt were important for students long-term success, post-high school as they reflect behaviors and dispositions necessary for success in college and the workforce.

***Who do I talk to if I have additional questions or need any clarification about any of these agreed-upon practices?***

For additional questions or clarification, please talk with your building administrator. Your Standards Leader and the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction can also be resources for you.