

West Chicago Community High School

Grading Non-negotiables

Grading impacts students. The structure of gradebooks, as well as homework policies, late work penalties, and assessment practices, affect student grades, and the choices that individual teachers, course teams, and divisions make have intentional and unintentional consequences. In an effort to provide accurate, equitable, and valid grades, WeGo faculty have piloted a variety of grading practices during the 2021-22 school year to identify practices that best serve our students and most accurately evaluate and communicate student learning.

Professional development has informed this year's grading work. The administrative team and our 2021-2022 "grading pilot group"¹ read Joe Feldman's [*Grading for Equity: What it is, Why it Matters, and How it can Transform Schools and Classrooms*](#) during 2020-2021 school year and the summer of 2021 respectively. Then, staff development time was devoted to building-wide and division-specific work with consultant, Becky Pepler, from [First Educational Resources](#) to enable faculty to evaluate their grading philosophies, practices, and procedures. The grading conversations facilitated by Becky Pepler, included analysis of the "[four pillars](#)" of equitable grading from First Educational Resources:

Pillar 1: Formative practice is NOT counted in an academic grade.

Pillar 2: Allow for reassessment to occur on all summative assessments.

Pillar 3: Remove non-academic factors from academic grades.

Pillar 4: Use student proficiency against specific learning targets as the basis for the academic grade.

Based on this year's professional learning, all divisions will be consistently

¹ Special thanks to members of the 2021-2022 WeGo "Grading Group" members: Brittany Abdishi, Nick Caltagirone, Jordan Covella, Tracy Eier, Sean Gimpert, Heather Gobel, Laura Heavey, Kelsey Jacobs, Ali Jones, Nicole Osborne, Katie Sullivan, Brian Turnbaugh, and Joe Zeman.

implementing two grading practices during the 2022-2023 school year.²

Grading Non-Negotiable #1: Summative and Formative Grading Components

Beginning in 2022-2023, all divisions will use a grading system that weights summative assessments as 90% of a student's grade and formative work as 10% of a student's grade.

Summative assessments measure what a student has learned during a unit, semester, or course by comparing the student's performance to explicit standards, objectives, and/or learning targets. Summatives, which may include essays, lab reports, projects, presentations, unit assessments, etc., evaluate what has been learned. (Quizzes may be summative or formative depending on their purpose.)

Formative assessments and/or assignments are those designed as practice and to provide feedback to students, parents/guardians, and teachers about what a student knows and is able to do at that time, as well as what the student has not yet mastered. Formatives are evidence that is used to *inform* students, teachers, and parents/guardians. In contrast to a summative or "assessment of learning," [Rick Stiggins](#) describes formative assessment as "assessment for learning, [which] occurs during the teaching and learning process rather than after it and has as its primary focus the ongoing improvement of learning for all students³." Formatives may include homework, group work, exit tickets, Google Forms, quizzes, reflections, surveys, rough drafts, etc. (Quizzes may be summative or formative depending on their purpose.) Because these assignments occur prior to a summative assessment they are intended as practice and will only count for 10% of a student's grade.

Each teacher and course team will work with its Division Head/Director to determine whether there will be one or more "categories" within the summative (i.e., tests, essays, projects, etc.) and formative (i.e., homework, participation etc.) grading categories to conform to the 90%/10% expectations. The final exam grade will be included within the 90% assessment grade.

² Note: *Due to the unique nature of performance based classes in Art, Driver's Ed, Music, and Physical Development, as well as certain Special Ed classes, the disciplines do not naturally align with the grading practices we are adopting, so courses in these departments will not comprehensively adopt these policies at this time. Therefore, division heads in these content areas will collaborate with teachers/course teams to identify and implement equitable grading practices. Likewise, some Dual Credit classes must follow college grading requirements.*

³ Stiggins, Rick. "Classroom Assessment for Learning." ASCD, ASCD, 1 Sept. 2002, <https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/classroom-assessment-for-learning>.

The gradebooks for each course team are to be aligned. Only common assessments may be entered into assessment categories, so the categories that comprise 90% of a student's semester grade are uniform to provide a common experience and equitable opportunities. The 10% formative component should closely resemble the gradebooks of other members of the team; however, there may be some limited differences to respond to the needs of students.

Grading Non-Negotiable #2: Retake Opportunities on All Summative Assessments

Since summative assessment will determine a student's grade and is intended to measure student learning, students will have the opportunity to retake summative assessments to demonstrate growth and mastery through reassessment.

This non-negotiable is not intended to require unlimited retakes on an assessment, nor is intended for students to abuse. Divisions will use their professional judgment and discretion under the guidance of the Division Head/Director to deter abuse of the system.

Four criteria are expectations regarding retakes for students:

- A. Students will receive a minimum of two weeks from the day/date an *assessment is returned* to retake the assessment. It will be at a course team/division head's discretion to determine if a student has longer than two weeks.
 - B. Students will engage in additional practice or provide new evidence of learning before being eligible to retake a summative assessment. Course teams will utilize common reassessment practices and procedures.
 - C. When a student completes a retake, the better grade of the two attempts will be recorded in the gradebook as a "comment" to record and label the lower grade and whether it is a first, second, or third attempt, etc. (The number of retakes will be determined at the course team/division level.)
 - D. When an assessment with multiple objectives cannot be separated into individual standards, objectives, or targets, teachers will administer the most concise version of reassessment. For example, if a student demonstrates learning/mastery on two of three learning standards, objectives, or targets on an assessment, the student will only retake the section that requires additional learning.
-

Considerations

The expectations communicated in this document are intended to create accuracy and consistency and improve communication with students and parents; nevertheless, building-wide change of any kind presents challenges. Therefore, we will continue to take a multi-year approach to examining and refining our grading practices in an effort to become increasingly equitable. Conversations and reflection among divisions and course teams will be essential to our continuous improvement process to address unanticipated outcomes of these shifting practices as they arise.

In addition to non-negotiables based on Pillar 1 and 2, future grading work will investigate Pillars 3 and 4.

Pillar 3: Remove non-academic factors from academic grades.

Pillar 4: Use student proficiency against specific learning targets as the basis for the academic grade.

These pillars consider the impact of student behaviors on grades and highlight the role of standards in equity-based grading.

DHs/Directors will work with course teams and their division to implement the non-negotiables outlined in this document. This is difficult but important work that will serve our students and improve our practice as educators.