

Sycamore Springs Middle School

Grading Guidelines 2021-2022

[Link to DSISD Secondary Grading Guidelines = click here](#)

Grading Beliefs:

We believe that:

- Each grade in the gradebook should represent a student's progress towards mastery of an essential skill.
- Grades represent the enduring understandings and abilities necessary for success in the next grade level or are relevant across content areas.
- Graded assignments will receive timely feedback so that students and families know where each student is in their mastery of skills.
- Grades should only reflect academic performance.
 - Grades should not be punitive.
 - Grades will not reflect behavior such as taking points off for late work.
 - Students will not earn grades for completion.
 - Students and families should be an integral part of the student's success across content areas. If students begin to struggle, the following will take place:
 - First, a student conference will occur if a student is at risk of failing after IA progress reports are issued.
 - Second, a parent, student, teacher conference will occur if a student is at risk of failing after IB progress reports are issued.
- A student cannot fail if:
 - It is a surprise to the student.
 - Students will be checking their grades during Tiger WIN time
 - Teachers will provide tiered support for students struggling with content concepts.
 - It is a surprise to the parents.
 - If a student is at risk of failing at a second progress report in a term, a parent must be notified by phone.
 - It is a surprise to counselors.
 - It is a surprise to administrators.
 - The student's grade fell below a 70 in the last week of the term grading period because this does not provide the student the opportunity to reassess.
- Teachers, students, and families should be aware of how grades impact UIL eligibility.

Grading:

- In designing experiences for students, learning is the ultimate goal.
- Effectively measuring learning is the driving force behind our grading beliefs.
- Grades should measure what a student has learned and reflect the depth and

complexity of knowledge attained.

Established grading guidelines

- Grade in-class assignments ONLY
 - Assignments synched to Skyward, must be completed in class.
 - Each grade should reflect a student's ability to transfer the essential knowledge or skills independently.
 - Assignments are due at the beginning of each class period.
 - Assignments will lock at 4:15 pm the day before the end of the (unit) summative assessment.
 - Projects or other assignments that count as an end-of-the-unit summative will lock five days after the original due date.
- Students will receive established rubrics or grading policies before beginning all projects and papers.
- There should be a sufficient number of grades within a term to reflect a student's mastery of content. This means that a single grade, formative or summative, should not weigh more than 25% of a student's average.
 - There must be a minimum of 1 formative assessment per week.
 - There must be a minimum of 3 summative assessments per term.
- Teachers cannot give a single grade that will cause a student to fail.
 - This can cause a lack of motivation.
- Teachers will not give grades for summative assessments in the last week of the grading period unless there is time for reassessment.
 - This allows time for reassessment.
- A final exam cannot cause a student to fail (unless it is a high school course).
 - If a student fails, they must:
 - Complete a reassessment OR complete a credit recovery program
- If a student is going to fail a term:
 - A parent must be notified by phone or through a conference.
 - Notification must be documented (Make a copy of this [link](#) to document the conversation if you need a sample document.)
- Have students track their mastery and be a partner in their journey to success.
 - When students track their progress, they take ownership of their learning.
 - It can be done during class time and/or Tiger WIN time.
 - Have students write down the learning target skills and knowledge at the beginning of the unit.
 - Have students record their progress of mastery when they receive feedback on their progress.

Types of Assessments

- **Formative Assessments:**
 - Are used to determine student mastery on smaller components of a unit before a summative assessment.
 - If a student is struggling on a formative assessment, interventions should occur before the summative assessment as needed; this includes students completing missing work.
- **Summative Assessments:**

- Show a student's mastery level at the end of the unit or topic of study.
- A student not showing mastery will receive intervention support as needed.
- **Bonus-Extra Credit**
 - Distorts a student's record of achievement.
 - Grades are broken as a communication tool if we give extra or bonus points for actions that do not reflect the desired learning outcome or mastery of the learning standard.
 - Teachers cannot give extra credit or bonus points for any reason.

Practice (Homework)

- In general, SSMS honors family time. Other than weekly reading assignments and weekly skill practice, assigned practice should be rare.
- It can be a false report of what students know.
- It should be a tool to allow the students to practice and extend their learning experience.
- May provide enrichment geared towards an individual's ability level.
- Teachers will make data-driven decisions to intentionally design practices based on the needs of the students.
- It should not be new learning.
 - New content can be introduced only through flipped classroom assignments.
- Practice will not be included in the formative or summative grading categories.
- Teachers can add a practice category in Canvas.
- Used to show current understanding of content
- Practice is not synced to Skyward.
- Practice is used as a paper trail of completed work.
- Teachers may use a short quiz or entrance ticket in class to assess specific content taught to act as formative assessment.

Incomplete Work

We understand students have reasons for not submitting work. For the student to establish ownership of learning, developing a plan for completion and submission is essential.

- There are two reasons why kids do not complete work:
 - They don't "care." (behavior)
 - Follow the Late Work Practices below
 - They don't know how. (academic)
 - Provide remediation/reteach immediately
- Teachers will assist students in establishing a personal plan for completing work and submitting it on time. (TIGER WIN time)
- Incomplete work does not show mastery, and students will be required to complete it.
- Contact parent and student (Canvas / Email)
- Use the ZAP process.

Late Work Practices

- Penalties for late work distort a student's record of achievement.

- Late work practices should lead to personal investment in learning.
- Deducting points for late work impedes our ability to discern whether students have mastered the standards by negatively skewing the reported outcome.
 - Points will not be deducted for late work.
 - Not meeting deadlines will be reflected in Canvas.
- Late or missing work applies only to mastery assignments (this includes projects).
- If a student is absent (excused absence), they must be given the same amount of days as the absence to submit the makeup work with no penalties.
- Teachers will promptly communicate with parents and students about missing assignments in an attempt to get missing work submitted.
 - Assign students to the *ZAP* process for missing work not submitted by the end of the week it was due.
 - Not to be assigned until you have attempted to collect work in your classroom by other means.
 - Once assigned, students will not be removed unless cleared by the teacher.

Reassessment

Recognizing that all students do not progress at the same rate, reassessment is imperative to document mastery accurately.

- Educators may offer reassessment opportunities to students who scored higher than a 70 for a summative, but they will not be required to attend re-teaching, tutoring, or campus-designed interventions.
- Educators are required to provide the opportunity for reassessment with test/quiz grades in the summative assessment category for learners who score below 70.
 - Because reassessment is always best practice for learning, parents must be notified that their student has scored below a 70 on a summative assessment; this can be done through Canvas email.
 - Reassessment may occur in different formats than the original (discussion, performance task, etc.).
 - Reassessment must be different from the original assessment.
 - A student may reassess only once per assessment.
 - Students have five days to reassess after receiving their grade.
- Teachers may provide an opportunity for students to redo a formative assessment one time if they score below a 70%
 - Formative assessment redo assignments must be completed at school.
- Teachers will post their reassessment procedures in their classrooms and communicate them to parents at the beginning of the school year.

No Zero Philosophy

We will not allow a child to *choose* a zero.

- **Zeros are NOT an option.**
 - Zeros emphasize the grading system and take away from students' mastery.
- Students should be allowed to turn in proof of mastery of an essential skill.

- If they haven't completed it during class, then make arrangements for them to demonstrate mastery at another time or in another way (WIN time).
 - Must occur before the end of the unit summative assessment.
- Given a choice, students will often opt for the behavior of procrastination or not working in class.
 - Make clear that classwork is for a grade and is not optional.
 - Check on each student's progress repeatedly throughout the class period.

Frequently Asked Questions:

How many grades per week are required: One grade per week, except on short weeks with holidays or the first week of school.

Are formative grades required to be assessments: No. Formative grades are daily work and can include in class work or assessments.

Are formative grades completion assignments? Formative grades may not be "blanket grades" (see District Grading Policy) where every student receives a 100 and must be feedback on a student's level of progress towards mastery of skills/knowledge.