

# Grading at Charlotte High School

## Introduction

At Charlotte High School, we have a unique and research based system for grading in our classrooms. In place since 2014-2015, the way we grade allows us to focus on student learning and ensuring that we can close gaps in knowledge, rather than simply creating opportunities to earn more points. This philosophy works to guarantee that students have the skills that they need to succeed in their classes, prepare for future classes, and ultimately, do well on the SAT, in college, and/or a future career. Many schools and districts around the state and country are working towards this type of system, and CHS is a recognized leader in the area, state, and across the country in this work.

## Classroom Instruction

When teachers introduce a topic or concept, they do so by introducing a standard, or big idea, for learning. These standards define what students must know and be able to do, and they are aligned to the SAT and required state standards. Each standard has a scale connected to it, and that scale defines levels of learning. Basically, if students can show they know parts of the standard with help they are at a level 1; if they can show they know some, but not all of the standard, they are at level 2; if they can show they know the standard, they are at a level 3; and if they can apply the standard in new ways, above and beyond what is taught in class, they are at a level 4. Scales are written specifically for each standard, clearly defining levels of learning. Activities in the classroom, then, directly relate to that standard and those levels on the scale. Teachers help students focus their learning on the scale levels, and continually work to help them move up the scale. The goal is to help students get to at least a level 2 on all standards by the end of the class but level 3 or 4 are preferred. Students learn at different paces and need different levels of help, so teachers build in varying activities, opportunities to redo tasks, tests, and quizzes, and different ways of allowing students to demonstrate what they know. The whole system is set up to focus on what students are learning and have learned, not the number of tasks that they complete.

## Grading and the Grade Book

We understand that assigning a letter grade at the end of a course is important in high school for scholarships, college admissions, and employers. So, we convert the score that students earn on the scales to letter grades in the following way:

<b>4</b>	A
<b>3.5</b>	A-
3.284	B+
<b>3</b>	B
<b>2.5</b>	B-
2.26	C+
<b>2</b>	C
1.996	C-
1.752	D+
<b>1.5</b>	D
1.256	D-
<b>1</b>	E
<b>.5</b>	E
<b>0</b>	E

It is also important to note that students must demonstrate some knowledge of all standards (at least a level 1) and level 2 knowledge of all power standards (those designated as essential by the teachers) in

order to pass a class. Therefore, if students have a .5 or a 0 on any standard, or a 1, .5, or 0 on a power standard, their grades convert to an *IP* (in progress) or *SNM* (standards not met) during the class, and a *NC* (no credit) at the end, regardless of the overall grade in the course. Depending on the situation and resources available, students may continue to work on those standards after the class is over to convert the *NC* back to a grade. Or, if there is a lot of additional learning needed, student may need to repeat the course. Arrangements to continue progress toward standards beyond a deadline require teacher pre-approval and are subject to teacher's professional discretion. Any granted extensions are entirely contingent upon student demonstration of work, effort, and engagement PRIOR to the arrangement.

Again, we are focused on learning and ensuring that students have the knowledge they need to succeed, not on simply finishing a class in a given time frame.

All of the standards for a course are listed in the grade book, and each one is scored from 0-4. This score is the result of multiple pieces of evidence, which can range from tests, to quizzes, to class projects, to any other piece of data that a teacher can use to determine how much a student knows. So, although one test may be a large piece of an overall standard score, it is the entire body of work around a standard that determines the overall grade on each one. Therefore, you will see in the grade book that standards make up 99-100% of a student's grade. All of the activities may still be listed as a way of communicating evidence to parents and students, but the grade is based on the overall performance on the standard.

### Results

Since we began using this system, we have seen drastic reductions in failure rates and the number of students who have to repeat classes, both of which are key indicators of drop outs. CHS's drop out rate is consistently less than 5%. In addition, we have seen growth in multiple performance indicators on the SAT and PSAT over the same time frame. Combined, these data points show evidence that students are learning more and finding more academic success. We are continuing to refine our practices to better focus on key learning, and we are working to implement additional strategies to help teach students non academic skills as well, like timeliness, follow through, and perseverance.

### Additional Resources

Our work is heavily based on the research from Marzano Research Laboratories and other leaders in the field of education. Please take time to view our standards and scales on the Charlotte High School home page, and if you are interested in learning more, we recommend these resources, as they are the basis for our work:

*The Art and Science of Teaching* – Robert Marzano

*The New Art and Science of Teaching* – Robert Marzano

*Classroom Assessment and Grading That Work* – Robert Marzano

*Designing & Teaching Learning Goals and Objectives* – Robert Marzano

*Formative Assessment and Grading* – Robert Marzano

*A Handbook for High Reliability Schools* – Robert Marzano, Phil Warrick, and Julia Simms

*A School Leader's Guide to Standards Based Grading* – Tammy Hefflebower, Jan Hoegh, and Phill Warrick

*Fair Isn't Always Equal: Assessing and Grading in a Differentiated Classroom* – Rick Wormeli

If you have additional questions, or you would like to discuss our philosophy, journey, practices, or ideas further, please contact:

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