

Q&A

A Helpful Guide to Understanding CUSD's Grading System for Elementary Grades 3-6

The purpose of the Chandler Unified School District's grading system is to (1) support student learning by applying research-based practices to make grade ranges more equitable, (2) ensure achievement grades are measurements of student learning, and (3) encourage greater effort by utilizing the most constructive approach.

Q: What are CUSD's grading guidelines?

A: Our report card includes achievement grades and standards indicators. For example:

Grade of A:	90-100% - The quality of a student's work is consistently outstanding, and the student is mastering state and district standards for the grade level.
Grade of B:	80-89% - The quality of a student's work is frequently above average, and the student is mastering state and district standards for the grade level.
Grade of C:	70-79% - The quality of a student's work is generally satisfactory, and the student is mastering and/or making significant progress towards mastering state and district standards for the grade level.
Grade of D:	60-69% - The quality of a student's work is frequently below average, and the student is having difficulty with standards for the grade level.
Grade of F:	50-59% - The quality of a student's work is consistently unsatisfactory, and the student is not mastering state and district standards for the grade level.

Q: Why aren't students receiving grades that are lower than 50% on their classroom work?

A: Our grading system is based on a 100-point scale that is converted into letter grades. The interval between numerical and letter grades is typically 10 points with the break points at 90, 80, 70, and so on. If we apply this to all letter grades so that each range was equal or proportionate, the threshold for each grade would be (A-B-C-D-F = 90-80-70-60-50). Therefore, the difference between a grade of F to D is 10 points, not the 50 points in a typical grading scale. It would be mathematically inaccurate to give a grade of less than 50, and would make it very difficult for a student to recover from a failing score of less than 50.

Q: Is it fair to give students 50% on their work, regardless of the amount of mistakes they made or how poorly they performed?

A: During the 2011-2012 school year, CUSD formed a committee of district administrators, principals, and teachers to research and discuss the practice of using zeroes in factoring student achievement grades. The committee found overwhelming educational research-based evidence of mathematical and ethical problems with the use of zeroes in a 100-point grading system. According to researcher, Dr. Thomas Guskey, "No studies support low grades or marks as punishments. Instead of prompting greater effort, low grades more often cause students to withdraw from learning" (2000, p.25). CUSD believes that it is in our students' best interests to promote learning by allowing students to earn at least 50% on completed work. If you would like further information, please visit the Elementary Education webpage on www.CUSD80.com.

Q: Does this mean that students can still earn 50% on missing assignments?

A: No, student work products that are not turned in are recorded in Infinite Campus as "Missing Assignments" and do not receive any points. Keep in mind that it is possible for teachers to have classroom procedures that allow modifications and accommodations to due dates, which allows students the opportunities to earn points on work that is turned in late. These types of classroom procedures are positive approaches to reinforcing healthy study habits and behaviors by motivating students to complete their work while developing their time management skills. In addition, student behaviors of completing work in a timely and appropriate manner are recorded in the "Behaviors that Promote Learning" section of the progress and report cards.

Q: Are homework assignments included in achievement grades?

A: Homework is not included in achievement grades; however, CUSD considers homework as important opportunities for students to practice, review, and apply knowledge. CUSD encourages students to understand that their full commitment to completing homework will enhance their ability to reach academic proficiency and mastery of the skills being taught in the classroom. Please note that students may be assigned work/projects that are guided in class but also require continued work at home. Project-based assignments may be graded if students are assigned to complete portions of the project at home.