

Grades are Outdated

Grades do not represent
the learning achieved

ReThink Education
Fort Osage High School

Blake Conrad
Elizabeth Broswick
Benjamin Nettleton
Kale Kimbrell
Danielle Brockmeyer
Stephen Johnson
Chase Owings
Valerie Norris
Haleigh Wilson

About Fort Osage High School

Current Events Class
Fall, 2020



Unique mix of Rural/Suburban

Approximately 1400 High School
Students

Located in Eastern Independence,
MO

About Us



Elizabeth Broswick



Chase Owings



Haleigh Wilson

Senior Students

- Goals

What we gained from this project

How this will prepare us for our future goals



Why This Topic?



What we felt about grades

How we determined this was the topic for us

Why we think this is important

Our Problem Statement

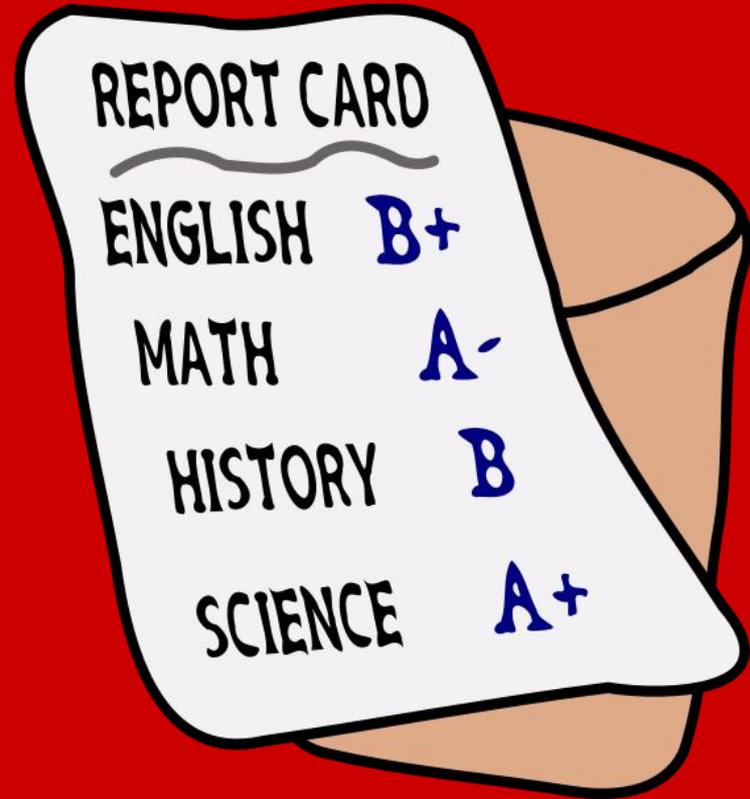
The problem: The grading scale doesn't accurately reflect a student's mastery of a subject.

“For all the effort, time, and best intentions teachers invest in those reams of grade reports, we are lying to ourselves and to our students' parents, cheating our students out of clear and accurate feedback on their academic process, and contributing to the greater illusion that grades are an accurate reflection of skill mastery.” -Jessica Lahey (an English Teacher)

History of grades in education

Grades in education have been in place for ages. The earliest found evidence of grades in school is from 1646 at Harvard. Said grades were used for exit exams.

By the time of the civil war grade were a normalcy in the world of education. After that, grades would be used for scoring in regular classes with little to no adjustment to the process throughout the years.

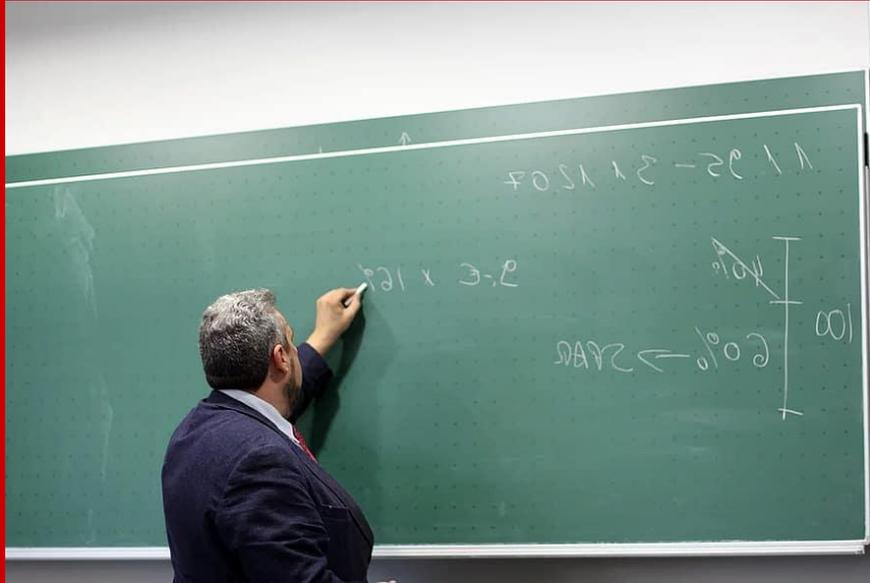


Grade impact

As high school students, we understand the impacts grades make on us.

- College Admission
 - Better grades provide better opportunities for continuing education
 - Better grades provide a better chance of acceptance into institutions
- Sports Eligibility
 - Better grades the more game time you'll get
 - Better grades gives you more practice times
- Scholarships
 - Better grades provide cheaper options to colleges
- Graduation
 - Out class rank is based off of our GPA
 - In order for us to graduate, we have to pass all required courses, passing is based off of grades
- Jobs
 - Some jobs look at your GPA to determine if they want to hire you

Teacher Survey



We surveyed different teachers from FOHS, asking them questions about the grading system, here are their responses.

Teacher Survey

Do you think the grading scale gives an accurate representation of a students mastery of a subject?

- It depends on how it is utilized. If we're talking true mastery, then practice, i.e. homework and classwork, shouldn't feed into the mastery evaluation.
- No
- This is a super difficult question to answer, for many reasons. I do think that grades can tell you a lot about how well a student understood the material. It is not perfect though.
- Grades are historically accepted measurements, but they do not represent mastery. They can be manipulated to demonstrate positive or negative results.

Teacher Survey

Could the grading system be improved? If so, how?

- It could, yes, but it would require a major overhaul of the perception of the educational system, including the university level.
- Yes. More information to the student regarding what the scores actually mean
- Things can definitely be improved, but this would require improvement from teachers and students both
- Improvement is possible, but the system as whole needs to address the issues

Do you believe there's a difference between grades and feedback in the classroom?

- Definitely
- Yes
- Yes, but the system isn't great at separating the two

Teacher Survey

When you offer a student feedback on how well or not well they are performing, do you see better results in the student?

- Sometimes. It really depends on the student and the level of their personal effort and motivation.
- Yes
- Not really, I don't think that many students read the feedback on the assignment. It is my experience that most students look at the score in the gradebook and move on.
- Students do not use the feedback to grow or improve capabilities. They are too focused on getting the score/grade and not the process.

Student Survey

We surveyed a number of our peers.

Here are the general top responses...



Student Survey

What value do grades hold?

- Shows how well we are doing
- Way of getting into college

Impact of grades?

- Impact everything in your younger life
- Impact amount of activities at school and after high school you're eligible to do
- Depending on your grades may or may not impact if colleges will accept you or not



Student Survey

Do grades matter? Why or why do they not matter?

- Yes, but only while we are going to school and college. Once you leave school and start working your grades from school won't matter.
- They matter because they decide whether or not you can go to college, if you can get scholarships, and things like that.
- Yes and no. Yes because it determines your future plans (sometimes) and no because not everyone plans to do something in their future that requires grades.



Student Survey

If you were to get an F on an assignment or test, how would that make you feel? Why?

- It always makes me feel like an idiot when I get an F on something because I feel like I should be able to do whatever the assignment is.
- Getting an F on an assignment would make me feel disappointed in myself because I would feel like I didn't try my hardest, but it's not the end of the world.

If you get an A does that motivate you or does it not affect you? How so?

- Yes, getting an A feels great and like an accomplishment for my work.
- It doesn't really affect me, because I'm a straight A student so I'm accustomed to them.

Student Survey

Does feedback from teachers about your grade help? Why?

- When it's constructive criticism, I think yes.
- Yes, it helps when I'm struggling because it lets me see how I can fix it.
- Feedback from teachers help me because it helps me realize how much I need to get my grade up. It gives me a sense of urgency

Would you rather have an A-F grading system or a 1-4 grading system?

- Students preferred an A-F system, but we believe that is due to familiarity more than actual impact.

What We Noticed

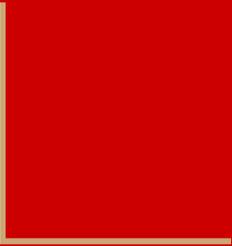
A comparison of the data from both surveys provided us with the following information.



Survey Findings

Based on the two surveys we conducted, we have seen both similarities and differences between the way teachers and students view grades.

- Students admitted that their grades have a big impact on them now, and realize that grades will influence their future as well.
- Teachers on the other hand, stated that grades don't necessarily reflect a student's knowledge of a subject.
- Both parties agreed that feedback makes a difference. This is something that needs to be improved.
 - If teachers gave more adequate feedback, and students actually used the feedback given to improve on their work, this can help the flawed grading scale.



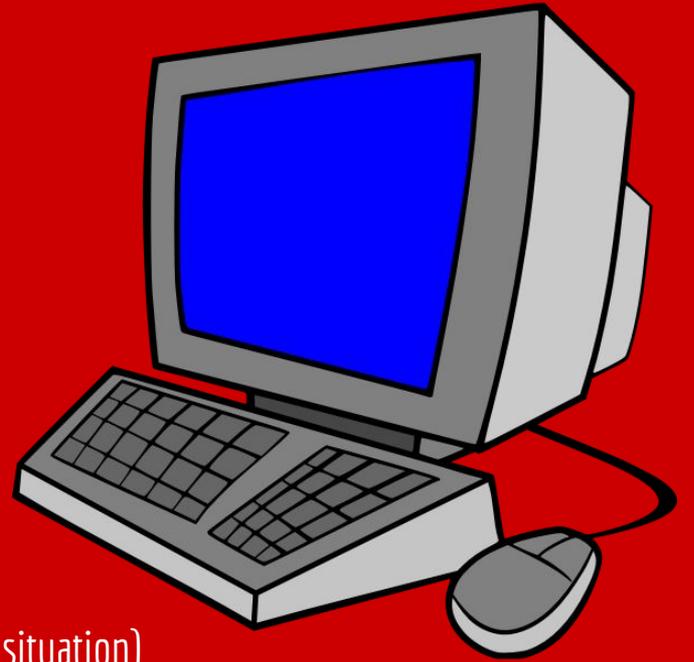
SOLUTIONS

The current situation:

Computer-based learning

Pros:

- More convenient for both teachers and students
- Assignments may take less time for the student
- Easier for teachers to assign, especially this year (COVID virtual situation)



The current situation:

Computer-based learning

Cons:

- There is not the hand to paper brain connection being made
- There is less room for a student to improve
- It's easier for a student to just “click answers” rather than give explanations and thoughts behind answers

Although computer based learning seems to be more “convenient” these days, it's important to consider what is really best for our education. Hands on learning needs to be implemented in the classroom.

Instead of Computer-based

- 1) Hands on learning is a form of education in which students learn by doing. Instead of simply listening to a teacher or instructor teach or explain about a given subject, the student engages with the subject matter to solve a problem or create something that activates more parts of the brain.

“Writing by hand connects you with the words and allows your brain to focus on them, understand them and learn from them. Writing by hand activates more parts of the brain than typing.”

In-class Feedback

- Providing feedback emphasizes the process of learning instead of worrying about the final grade.
- There are multiple ways for teachers to use live feedback as a good way to help.
 - Know Your Goals and Name Them- helping students find goals with the assignments that they have.
 - Be Transparent with Students- Let the students know what kind of goals you have for them and keep them in the loop with how they are going about meeting their goals.
 - Strive for Consistency- If the student is responding well to the goal and method of meeting the goal don't change the way you are providing help
 - Offer Context- if a student needs help understanding material or an assignment be there and offer help to make what they are trying to do more obtainable.

Providing Feedback

Teachers can offer a student more feedback tailored to their specific needs, in hopes to help a student better comprehend what areas of improvement they need

Teachers can better improve their feedback by using these 5 helpful tips:

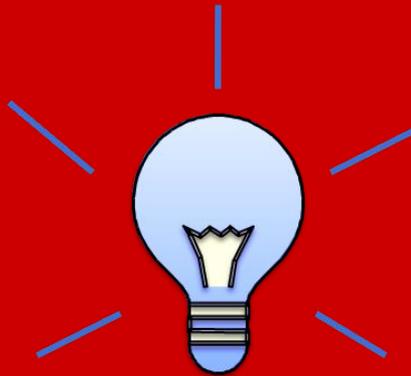
- Be as specific as possible
- The sooner the better
- Address the learner's investment toward a goal
- Present feedback carefully
- Involve learners in the process



Our Proposal:

Instead of letter grades, we would like to see a system based upon hands-on work encouraging a deeper depth of learning of consistent and defined standards, and focused on prompt teacher feedback.

We believe that grades should be based on how much knowledge a student is demonstrating. Using the 1-4 grading scale could better incorporate this.



For Example



A student is graded on how much knowledge they've incorporated into their work. A student may get a 2 at first, but has the ability to work up to a 4 if they spend more time soaking up the material and actually LEARNING. Instead of just meeting the "requirements."

Making This Happen

- Overhaul of educational expectations and understanding
 - Toss out the grading scale
 - Create community awareness and understanding
 - Create college expectation equivalents
- Define, examine, and implement specific standards
 - Develop and spend time understanding specific state or district standards/expectations
 - This will take time to process and connect current assignments to standards
 - Attaching specific state or district standards to individual assignments
 - Score and provide feedback on these standards within assignments
 - Move away from grades as a holistic approach and more emphasis on rubrics
- Provide the time for teachers, districts, and colleges to understand
 - This will not be immediate and will need to be implemented with time

Our Goal

Ultimately, we want to see future students succeed in classes based upon their knowledge, not jumping through hoops and completing assignments simply for grades.

We would like to see districts implement plans that allow successful students to reach standards requirements and not necessarily course requirements.





We Appreciate Your Time

Thank you for joining us today. If you have questions, we would be happy to answer them at this time.

Please join us on our discussion.

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