

Equitable Grade Scale

A dialogue on applying grading scales to
build student success



Continuing the Educational Transformation

Common Core State Standards

COVID-19 Pandemic
(online learning)

Opportunity to
continue reflection



Points to Consider When Reflecting on Grading Scale



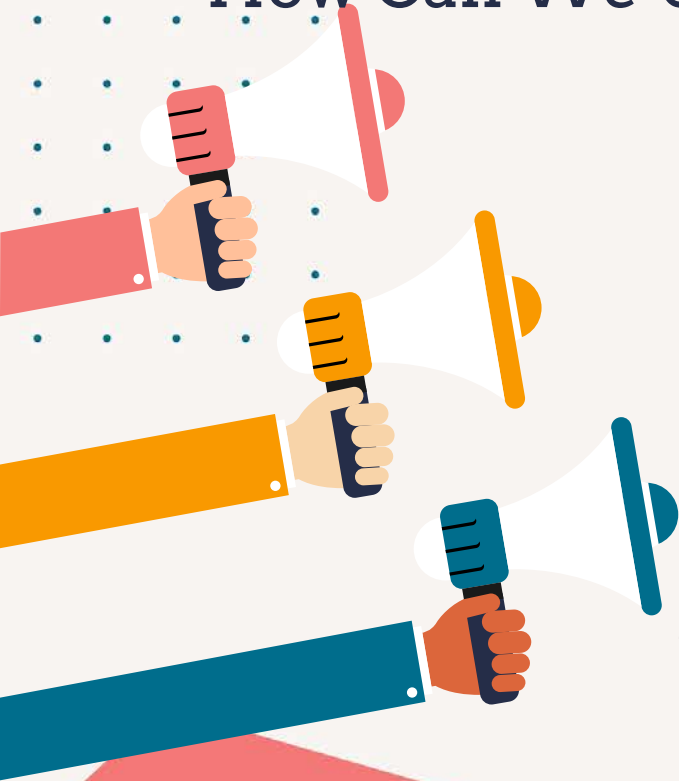
01 Expectations for student performance do not change.

02 An 'A' is still an 'A'...an 'F' is still an 'F'. The grade scale is simply leveled out.

03 Motivates students to engage when they see success as an option.

04 Allowing students the opportunity to recover from a failure, embodying a Growth Mindset.

How Can We Use Grades for Student Success?



"Our studies show that teaching people to have a 'Growth Mindset,' which encourages a focus on effort rather than on intelligence or talent, helps make them high achievers in school and in life"

-Carol Dweck

"Minus 18 sucks the life out of you, +2 says 'I ain't all that bad.'"

-Rita Pierson

"The grade is NOT the reward, nor can it ever be considered as such. Once a grade becomes a bartering tool, its power to inform stakeholders, and be used to make instructional decisions, or document progress accurately, is impugned."

-Rick Wormeli

The Grading Practice of Early School Systems

The traditional scale awards only 10 percentage points to A,B,C and D grades, **but awards 60 percentage points to an**

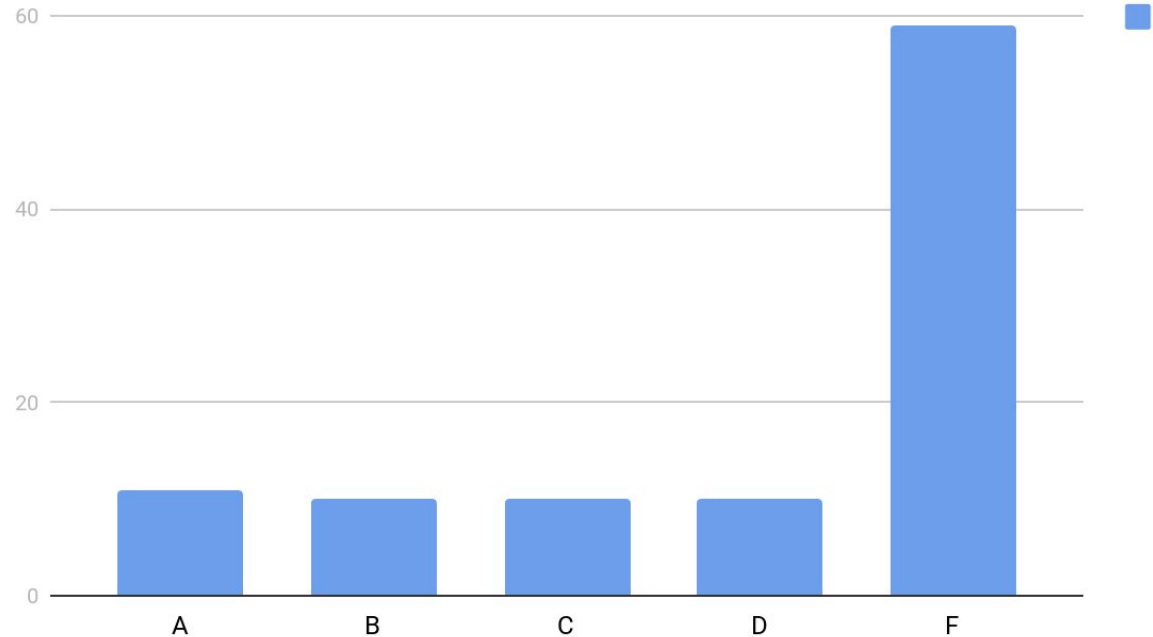
F. This is a skewed scale. It was originally developed in the early 1900s, when 50% was considered mastery and grades of 25% or 75% were rare (Smallwood, 1935).



The Traditional Scale

Percentage	Letter Grade
90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
0-59%	F

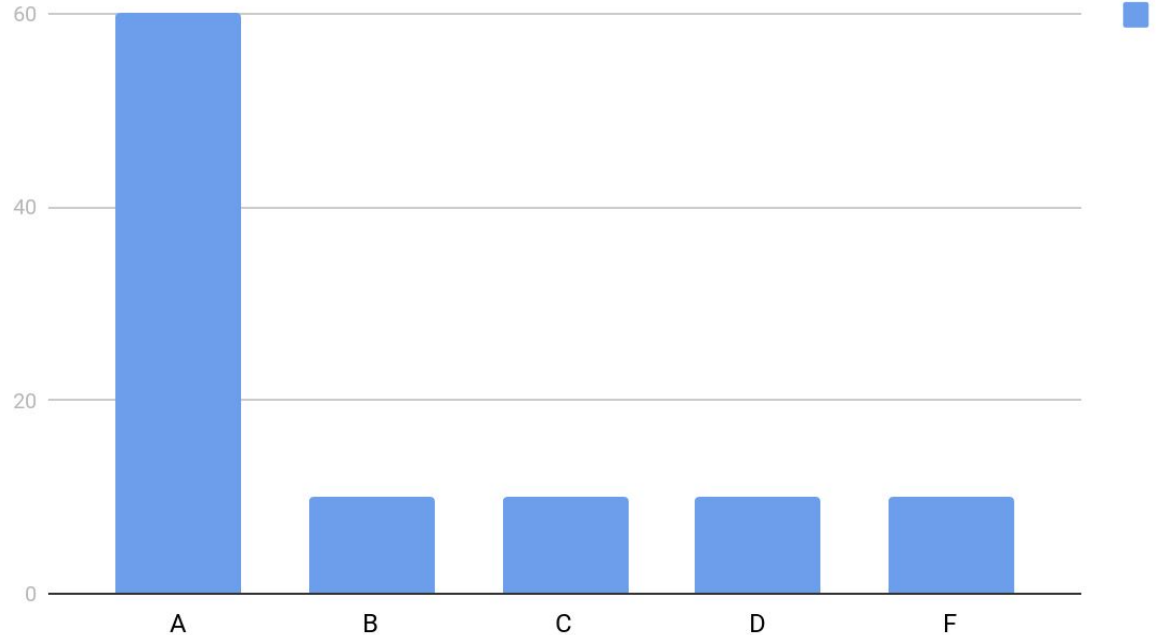
Percentage Points



How Would We Think About Things if the Scale Were Reversed?

Percentage	Letter Grade
41-100%	A
31-40%	B
21-30%	C
11-20%	D
0-10%	F

Percentage Points



Testimonial the Teacher Point of View

"My journey to changing the way I graded started when I realized that there was a point of no return. A point that a student's grade is so low that there is no hope for redemption. And that lack of hope led to increased issues with student motivation and behavior. Once the student knew they cannot do anything to pass, they also lose any motivation to do anything productive, including managing their behaviors. When I stopped giving grades under 50, the students who didn't do anything, still could fail. 50+50+50 still averages to 50. But what did change was student motivation. When they looked at their grade, they saw hope. And a path to redemption. They weren't too low that they couldn't turn things around, and find some success. Success is a great motivator. Even small successes can drive students to reach for more. And in the end, our goal is for our students to learn. A zero (0) in the gradebook tell us nothing about what a student did (or did not) learn. But a 50- A 50 may not tell me much more than a 0, but It does give the student a chance to change and isn't what what they need? A chance."

—GISD Special Education Teacher.

What is an Equitable Grade Scale?

Equal Weights

Letter grades are each given the same percentage weight.



Mobility

Student grades move up and down the grade scale more fluently to reflect level of student mastery.

Equity

Provides a more equitable path for students who are at-risk.



Confidence through grade recovery

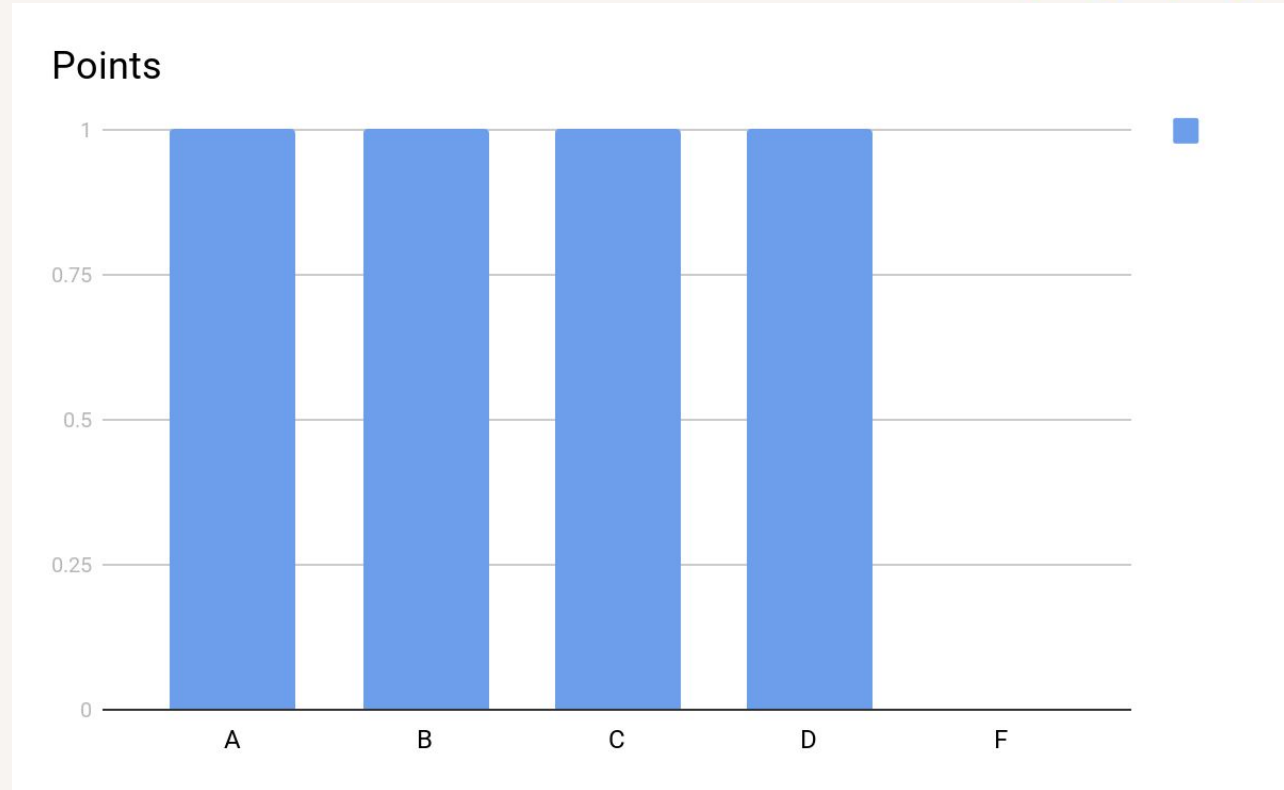
Failing students are able to experience success as they engage and receive intervention supports.





Example of Equitable Grading Scale: GPA

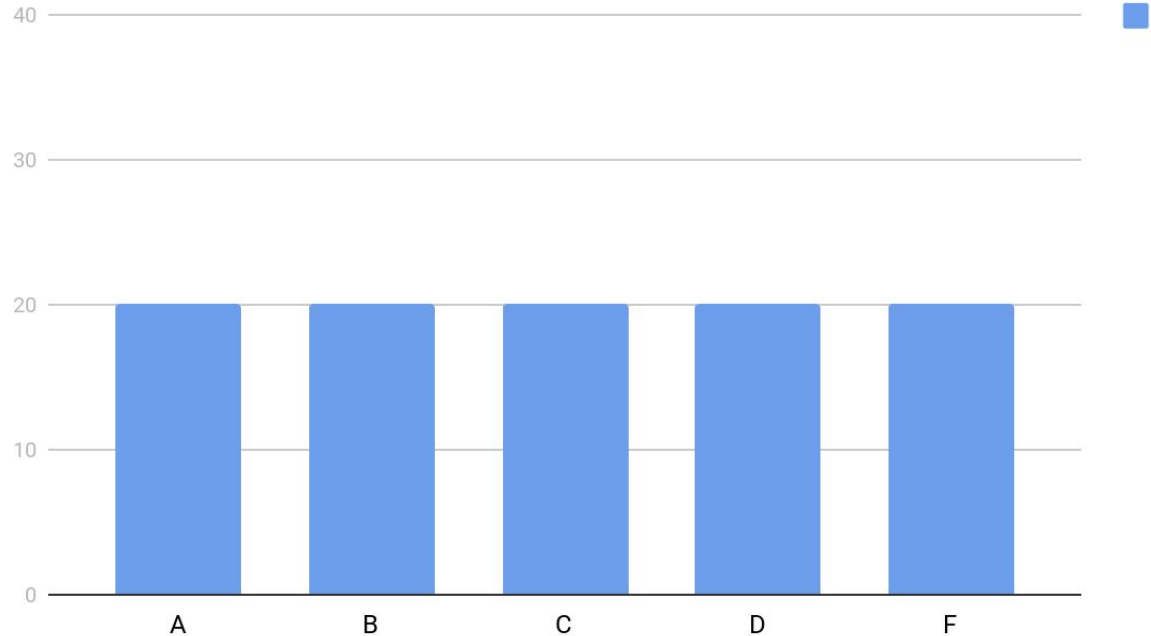
Percentage	Letter Grade
4	A
3	B
2	C
1	D
0	F



Example of Equitable Grading Scale: 20%

Percentage	Letter Grade
81-100%	A
61-80%	B
41-60%	C
21-40%	D
0-20%	F

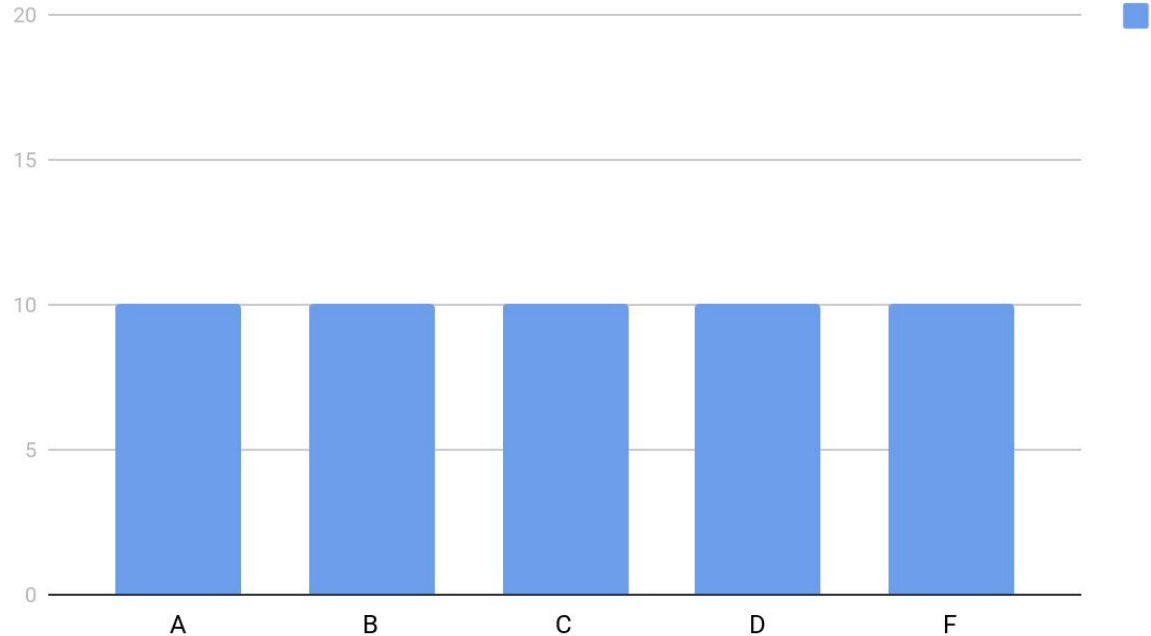
Percentage Points



Example of Equitable Grading Scale: 10% (50-100%)

Percentage	Letter Grade
90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
50-59%	F

Percentage Points



Why Make this Change Now?

- The pandemic has allowed us to examine our practices through a new lense.
- New learning style (online) requires development of new skill set, which means a Growth Mindset is more essential than ever before.
- Students are learning how to be a new type of student. They have a need for support and an opportunity to recover failing grades.
- The old system emphasises failure more than success, and does not accurately reflect level of mastery.

Predicting Proficiency

What final grade would you expect each student to earn at the end of the school year?

A	Above Proficiency
B	Proficiency
C	Nearing Proficiency
D	Beginning Steps of Proficiency
F	No Evidence of Proficiency

STUDENT 1	STUDENT 2
22.5% of year: no evidence of proficiency	55% of year: no evidence of proficiency
77.5% of year: proficient	45% of year: beginning steps of proficiency

Mathematically Possible vs Past Performance

Student 1			
Q1-20	F	Q1-50	F
Q2-80	B	Q2-80	B
E1-80	B	E1-80	B
S1=53	F	S1= 66	D
Q3-80	B	Q3-80	B
Q4-80	B	Q4-80	B
E2-80	B	E2-80	B
S2=80	B	S2=80	B
FG=66	D	FG= 73	C

Student 2			
Q1-20	F	Q1-50	F
Q2-60	D	Q2-60	D
E1-50	F	E1-50	F
S1=41	F	S1= 55	F
Q3-45	F	Q3-50	F
Q4-60	D	Q4-60	D
E2-50	F	E2-50	F
S2=52	F	S2= 55	F
FG=47	F	FG = 55	F

Will This Solve the Failure “Problem”?

No

It only changes the “weight” of failure to enable student success if the student engages with the work and demonstrates mastery.

Preventing Student Failure Requires More Than Grades



- **Reflection on what is being assigned:** Ensure we are assigning a reasonable amount of work; not what we would do in person, but what is reasonable for students to complete in an online learning environment.

- **Power of Re-dos:** Allow students to re-do assignments if they have not demonstrated mastery and have received a grade below a B.

- **Relationships:** Continue to build relationships with students and families. If they are not showing up or not turning in assignments, it's key to get to the "why."

An Even Distribution of Percentage Points is NOT

It is NOT a free pass for students

Students must do the work and demonstrate mastery to pass the class (i.e. If they do not do the work or demonstrate mastery, they would earn a 50% and still fail the class).

It is NOT a free pass for teachers

Teachers must continue to support students with high quality standards aligned assignments and support at-risk students with interventions.

An Even Distribution of Percentage Points IS

Equitable

Ensuring failure does not carry more weight than mastery. Allowing for student success, especially for at-risk , EL and SPED students.

Responsive

Allows for flexibility given the current pandemic and novelty of online learning.

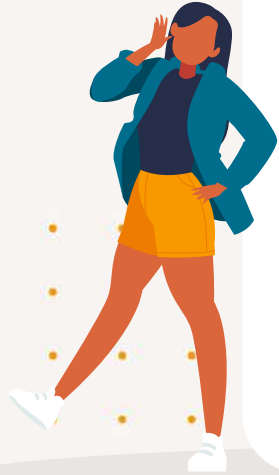
More Accurate

Reflects student mastery of the standards rather than struggle during the learning process.

Problem vs. Solution

Problem

Allowing an uneven distribution of percentage points for failure creates a disproportionate failure rate at the end of the year. Students are not able to recover their grade, even if they are demonstrating mastery.



Solution

Adopting an Equitable Grading policy which evenly distributes percentage points to allow grades to accurately reflect student mastery.





Let us build
bridges, not
barriers for
our
students.

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The background features a light beige color with several decorative elements: a large red polygon on the left, a grid of small orange dots on the right, and various other geometric shapes in shades of red, pink, and teal.

Thank you for engaging in the dialogue!

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