Albemarle County
Public Schools

GRADING
HANDBOOK

FOR TEACHERS

OUR PRACTICES

Accurate
Describe student achievement of knowledge and skills demonstrated in school settings

Consistent
Within and across students, teams, departments, courses, and schools

Support Student Learning
Encourage continuous engagement in learning

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Cover art provided by Ashlynn Shinault, Henley Middle School

Albemarle County Public Schools ("ACPS") is committed to a balanced and equitable assessment system. Balanced assessment systems provide accurate and timely information about student learning and achievement. The crux of a balanced assessment system is equitable grading practices. Healthy grading practices encourage and support learning by helping students and teachers see that their continued efforts will result in success.

Grades (grading) are the representation of student achievement, either a letter or number score, and should accurately represent a student's mastery of course standards. The purpose of a grade is to communicate student achievement at a point in time. Grades will be accurate, supportive of student learning, and consistent.

Assessment is gathering and interpreting information to determine where students are on a continuum of what they know, understand, and are able to do. It is the act of describing student performance, primarily for the purpose of enhancing learning. Teachers will develop balanced assessment plans that provide sufficient and useful evidence of the students' needs, progress, and achievement.

In order for student assessment information to improve curriculum, instruction, and student learning, accurate analysis of assessment results must be followed by feedback. Teachers shall give feedback to students at various points of instruction and the students and teachers must take action that supports learning. This feedback cycle is critical for student achievement of learning targets and is part of the formative process of assessing and learning. Grades are assigned at the end of this process and represent a student's achievement.

The crux of a balanced assessment system is equitable grading practices. Healthy grading practices encourage and support learning by helping students and teachers see that their continued efforts will result in success.

Updated July 2022

Note: *All PowerTeacher Gradebook Configuration Guides can be found under the Teacher tab on our For Staff Page. k12albemarle.org/for-staff*

GRADING POLICY

Grading practices in the ACPS will be:

SUPPORTIVE

Reflect individual differences and rates of learning

Address the unique needs of special populations of students

Make adjustments for transitional periods (including elementary to middle and middle to high)

Encourage students to take an active role in setting goals and assessing progress

Foster a positive self-image for the student

Inform teaching practices and student learning

Promote practices that encourage continuous engagement in learning

Provide parents and students ongoing, credible, and useful feedback in a timely manner

ACCURATE

Accurately describe student achievement of knowledge and skills demonstrated in school settings

Align to standards for student learning Separated from work habits

Impartial and fair, not influenced by a teacher's implicit bias or reflective of a student's environment

Utilize mathematically sound calculation

CONSISTENT

Within and across students, teams, departments, courses, and schools

Procedures are common across schools for guidelines, revisions, and Standards Based Reporting

For more information, see **School Board Policy IKBA, Grading Policy**
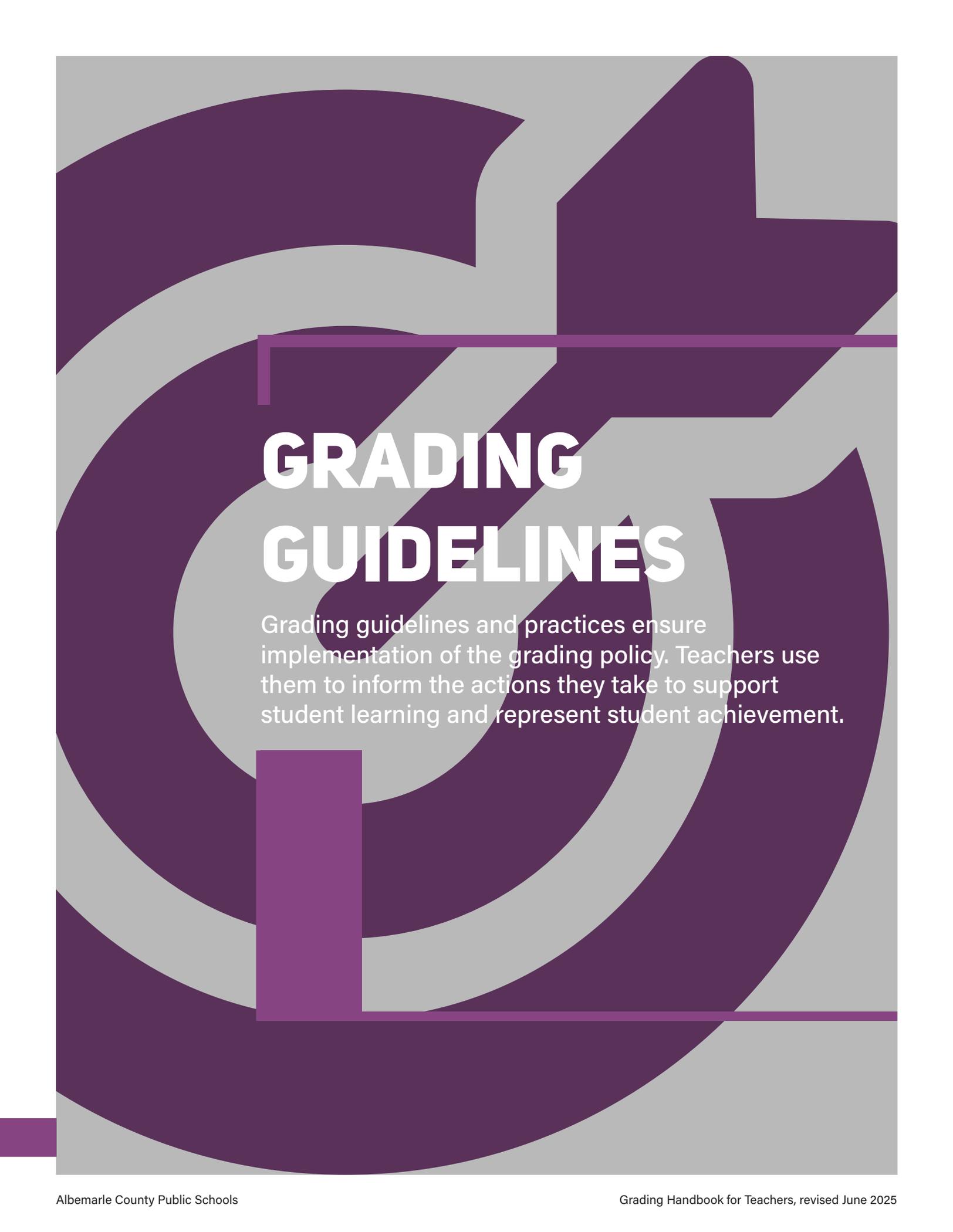
GRADING GUIDELINES

Grading guidelines and practices ensure implementation of the grading policy. Teachers use them to inform the actions they take to support student learning and represent student achievement.

GRADING GUIDELINE #1

Use only student evidence of achievement; extra credit and bonus points should not inflate grades

✳ WHAT IT MEANS

Students shall not be awarded extra credit for behaviors, attendance to outside events, bringing items to school, or bonus questions on tests.

✳ WHY

Extra credit distorts grades; it is not a clear indication of what a student knows, understands, and is able to do.

✳ CONNECTING PRACTICE TO POLICY

- Extra credit is not an *accurate* reflection of what students know, understand, or are able to do
- Extra credit is not applied *consistently* across classes, courses or schools
- Extra credit does not *support student learning*
  - Extra credit for bringing in items or attending events exacerbates inequity
  - Allowing bonus questions can hide student understanding

✳ STRATEGIES THAT SUPPORT TEACHING & LEARNING

- Don't use bonus questions to "cover up" student learning, instead allow students to revise in order to demonstrate learning
- **What this looks like in the gradebook:**
  - Discontinue the use of the "extra points allowed" feature in Powerschool

PowerTeacher Gradebook Configuration for Guideline #1

GRADING GUIDELINE #2

Provide practice opportunities for learning; if a grade level or content team chooses to include practice in a student's overall grade, it should have a minimal impact

✳ WHAT IT MEANS

Teachers should provide feedback on skills, concepts, and/or processes students practice in order for them to improve their performance. If a practice assignment is included in the student's overall grade, it should not be counted more than 10%. Practice should be scored for completion rather than penalizing students for inaccuracies.

✳ WHY

Students should have the opportunity to improve understanding through authentic practice (e.g. any work that increases or improves fluency of a skill or a process that is not yet fluent) without being penalized for making mistakes while they are learning.

✳ CONNECTING PRACTICE TO POLICY

- Grading practice decreases the accuracy of a grade.
- Ungraded practice promotes a growth mindset to support student learning.
- PLCs/Departments should be consistent in their grading of practice.

✳ STRATEGIES THAT SUPPORT TEACHING & LEARNING

- Provide students feedback on practice in order to support continued learning
- Track practice assignment so that students and families what students have completed
- Support learners by making connections between practice and assessment results
- Make clear to students when a practice is assigned that it will be included in students' grade. Do not "surprise" students with graded practice
- Because practice is not being scored for accuracy, a revision opportunity is not necessary.
- **What does this look like in the gradebook:**
  - **If you choose to count practice as part of the grade:**
    - Practice assignments cannot constitute more than 10% of the overall grade for the course. When calculating total points, practice should not count more than 10% for the grading period. If teachers are using categories, practice category should not weigh more than 10%.
  - **If you choose not to include practice as part of the grade, and would like to use the gradebook to communicate to families, you can use the following strategies:**
    - Collect only indicator -- no grade attached
    - Provide a score on an assignment, but mark the assignment as not counted in final grade
    - Provide a score on an assignment, but include it in a gradebook category that doesn't count towards the final grade (e.g. Create a category for "Practice Work" that is excluded from the final grade)

PowerTeacher
Gradebook
Configuration for
Guideline #2

GRADING GUIDELINE #3

Use "missing" or "incomplete" for assignments in the gradebook in place of zero

✳ WHAT IT MEANS

Eliminating zero means discontinuing the practice of entering grades lower than 50. The minimum grade on the ACPS scale is 50% which creates a 10 point scale between each letter grade.

✳ WHY

Grades shall communicate what students know; the zero is an outlier on a 100 point scale. The zero also creates grades which prevent students from "catching" up in a class.

✳ CONNECTING PRACTICE TO POLICY

- Zero is mathematically in*accurate*
  - Zero skews the average overall grade
  - Minimum grading (50% in place of zero) creates a true 10 point scale
- Zero is used in *consistent*ly across schools and classes
- Zero does not *support student learning*
  - Zero is not a motivator; in fact experts would say it does the opposite
  - Zero should not be a behavior management tool
  - Zero does not represent what students know, understand, and can do

✳ STRATEGIES THAT SUPPORT TEACHING & LEARNING

- Set expectations for when a student doesn't show proficiency; issue logical consequences like attending intervention/enrichment times
- Use the Incomplete or Insufficient Evidence code as a final grade for the term, when students have not demonstrated essential understandings for the term.
- Do not allow students to opt out of essential work. Set and communicate clear deadlines for when work must be completed. Partner with students and families to communicate work that needs to be completed (i.e create learning pacts, conferences with students and families, invite students to intervention/remediation time).
- **What does it look like in the gradebook:**
  - Enter the MISSING (will calculate as a 50 + missing flag) for assignments not turned in
  - When a teacher enters any score less than 50, the grade will automatically be calculated as 50% for the overall grade of the assignment.

PowerTeacher Gradebook Configuration for Guideline #3

GRADING GUIDELINE #4

Grades report student achievement; remove extraneous information from grades

✱ WHAT IT MEANS

Examples of behaviors or work habits include participation, effort, attendance, classroom behavior, organization skills, preparedness, neatness, etc. The categories do not reflect student achievement and should not be included in student grades.

✱ WHY

Grades should represent student *academic* performance. Although other factors play a role in student grades, they should be reported through feedback or comments to be shared with students and families.

✱ CONNECTING PRACTICE TO POLICY

- Grades that include behaviors are in*accurate*
  - Grades should measure student achievement, solely
  - Behaviors include effort, attendance, participation, compliance, organization, etc.
- Grading participation/behavior is in*consistent* across the division, schools, teachers
- Grading behavior doesn't reflect *student learning*
  - Work habits are a measure of how, not what students have learned
- Grading behavior/work habits is *inequitable*
  - It rewards students who "do school" well
  - Grading behaviors exacerbates biases

✱ STRATEGIES THAT SUPPORT TEACHING & LEARNING

- Point out connections between class activities and assessments
- Communicate feedback about non-academic behaviors with students and families
- Create learning pacts and partnerships with students
- **What this looks like in the gradebook:**
  - No participation/attendance/organization categories that factor into grades
  - Use Powerschool comments to share non-academic behavior feedback

PowerTeacher Gradebook Configuration for Guideline #4

GRADING GUIDELINE #5

Teachers provide opportunities and structures to implement the revision process as needed

✱ WHAT IT MEANS

Students and teachers will use the Revision Protocol in schools to support improved understanding. Since students learn at different rates, it is important that teachers acknowledge this and allow students to improve their understanding on an agreed to timeline.

✱ WHY

Making mistakes is part of the learning process and students should have the opportunity to correct those mistakes and/or show additional evidence of learning. Creating an environment that recognizes that mistakes are a part of the learning process fosters a growth mindset because it shifts the emphasis from the grade to the learning. Students have a variety of reasons for an initial poor assessment; however it is important that each student is given the opportunity to improve their understanding.

✱ CONNECTING PRACTICE TO POLICY

- Allowing students to reassess on material creates a more *accurate* depiction of students' knowledge
- Using a protocol or policy guideline for revisions supports *consistent* implementation across schools and teachers
- Error analysis *supports student learning* in that students are required to correct misconceptions and mistakes in their understanding.

✱ STRATEGIES THAT SUPPORT TEACHING & LEARNING

- Teachers should chunk or arrange assessments by standard/learning goal/concept
- For most students, an opportunity to relearn will be necessary. However, some students who've made careless errors still deserve the opportunity to revise their work.
- In order to ensure equitable opportunities, the revision process should be built into the assessment cycle during the instructional block of time.

GRADING GUIDELINE #5 CONT'D

Teachers provide opportunities and structures to implement the revision process as needed

- **Use the following Revision Protocol:**
    - Identify and provide feedback on student evidence that did not meet learning targets.
    - Students should only revise/show improvement on the portion(s) of the assessment that needs improvement
        - During the instructional block (Tier 1), teachers will support students to address errors or show improvement on summative assessments and provide structures for "re-learning" and revision.
        - Students may also take advantage of additional support during intervention and enrichment time built into the school day as well.
    - Students may be asked to complete tasks prior to revising an assessment (examples: complete assignments connected to misconceptions, error analysis, test reflections, meeting with the teacher, etc.)
    - Use a reasonable timeline for students to show new evidence of learning (approximately 2 weeks from the time students receive initial feedback; reasonable deadlines are recommended)
- **What this looks like in the gradebook:**
    - The initial grade and revision grade shall be recorded in the gradebook
        - It is important to communicate to all stakeholders (students, families, teachers) both scores to show trends over time and demonstrate student growth (or lack thereof).
        - If using the existing assignment title for the revision:
            - The initial score should be included in the comment section of the assignment grade.
            - The improved score should be listed for the assignment.
        - If using a new assignment title for the revision:
            - The initial score should be marked "exempt" so as not to be included in the overall grade
            - The improved score should be listed as a new assignment with the title REVISION in the assignment name.

PowerTeacher Gradebook Configuration for Guideline #5

GRADING GUIDELINE #6
Use only individual achievement evidence

✳ WHAT IT MEANS

Use only individual achievement evidence. Don't include group scores in grades.

✳ WHY

Group work is for learning, not assessment. Students are encouraged to work cooperatively, and develop social skills in the process; however they should not be graded on another students' understanding of content or behaviors.

✳ CONNECTING PRACTICE TO POLICY

- Group scores lack *accuracy* for individuals because it is conflated with the learning evidence of other students.
- Group scores are in*consistent*. In order to most consistently report a students' understanding of material, students should be assessed individually and given feedback on collaborative skills.
- Cooperative learning and group work *supports student learning* by building important social and workplace readiness skills; however individual student achievement should be based on evidence towards learning goals.

✳ STRATEGIES THAT SUPPORT TEACHING & LEARNING

- Use cooperative learning as an instructional strategy for students to think and share in the learning process; it is not used as an assessment method.
- Provide and teach clear expectations for students working collaboratively and practice cooperative learning.
- Grade students on their assignment within the project with clear guidelines for individual performance.
- **What this looks like in the gradebook:**
  - Individual scores/assessments for evidence of learning
  - Comments about student's ability to collaborate, meet deadlines, etc regarding group expectations

PowerTeacher
Gradebook
Configuration for
Guideline #6

GRADING GUIDELINE #7

Report student achievement towards learning goals

✳ WHAT IT MEANS

Assessments shall be aligned to student evidence towards predetermined learning goals. In grades K - 8, the division will work towards a Standards Based Reporting System (currently implemented in Elementary school).

✳ WHY

Reporting students' grades as an aggregate of everything they have learned does not provide valuable information for students and families. By reporting student's progress towards reporting standards, students and families can see more clearly where students strengths and areas for growth are in each content area.

✳ CONNECTING PRACTICE TO POLICY

- Grades that indicate how a student is progressing along a continuum of learning reflect a more *accurate* depiction of what students know, understand, and are able to do
- Using Learning Goals from division curriculum frameworks, and implementing common assessments ensures *consistency* in courses
- Assessments aligned to learning goals help students understand what the expectations are for learning as well as the levels of performance. When students know their standing in relation to a goal, teachers can better *support* them in their next steps.

✳ STRATEGIES THAT SUPPORT TEACHING & LEARNING

- Chunk assessments by learning goal or reporting standards
- Make assessment items with the goals they are aligned to
- Communicate with students what reporting standards/learning goals they have met and which ones they are still working towards
- **What this looks like in the gradebook:**
    - Options to consider:
        - Include the aligned learning goals in the assignment description
        - Name assessments by reporting standards/learning goals
        - Organize your gradebook according to reporting standards/ learning goals instead of assignment types

PowerTeacher Gradebook Configuration for Guideline #7

GRADING GUIDELINE #8

Collect multiple pieces of student data to show evidence of learning, including formative and summative assessments

✳ WHAT IT MEANS

Teachers should plan for multiple and varied ways for a student to demonstrate learning relative to a learning goal—both formative and summative assessments. Formative assessments are given before and during learning in order to help teachers make decisions about the appropriate instructional steps needed to move student learning forward and close gaps. Summative assessments are given at the end of a learning cycle (i.e. cycle of instruction, practice, and feedback) to measure student progress towards learning goals.

✳ WHY

Learning is developmental and will grow over time. This guideline supports the idea that collecting multiple pieces of evidence, both formal and informal, towards student learning (over time and within a "unit of study") allows students to demonstrate understanding in more than one way, at different times during the cycle of learning.

"Grades should be based on a collection of evidence assembled over time. As with all assessment, grading is an evidentiary process. The quality of the evidence makes a great deal of difference," (Learning Sciences, 2020).

✳ CONNECTING PRACTICE TO POLICY

- Multiple pieces of evidence provide a more **accurate** representation of learning. Emphasizing student achievement later in the learning cycle is a more **accurate** reflection of student learning.
  - Pieces of evidence may look like:
    - Formative — quizzes, first drafts, quick checks, labs, and/or exit tickets. Summative — unit tests, final drafts, projects/products, performance assessments
- When teachers collect multiple pieces of student data over time, it helps to show that students have demonstrated **consistency** in their performance.
- Collecting student work over time and in multiple formats helps students show what they know in a variety of ways and **supports student learning**.

✳ STRATEGIES THAT SUPPORT TEACHING & LEARNING

- Intentionally design formative and summative assessment inflection points throughout a unit of study
- Prioritize the most recent evidence of student learning (i.e., after a feedback cycle) and summative above formative assessments to determine what students know, understand and/or are able to do
- Incorporating choice in how students show evidence of learning when possible.
- **What this looks like in the gradebook:**
  - Multiple formative and/or summative assessments linked to learning goals.

PowerTeacher Gradebook Configuration for Guideline #8
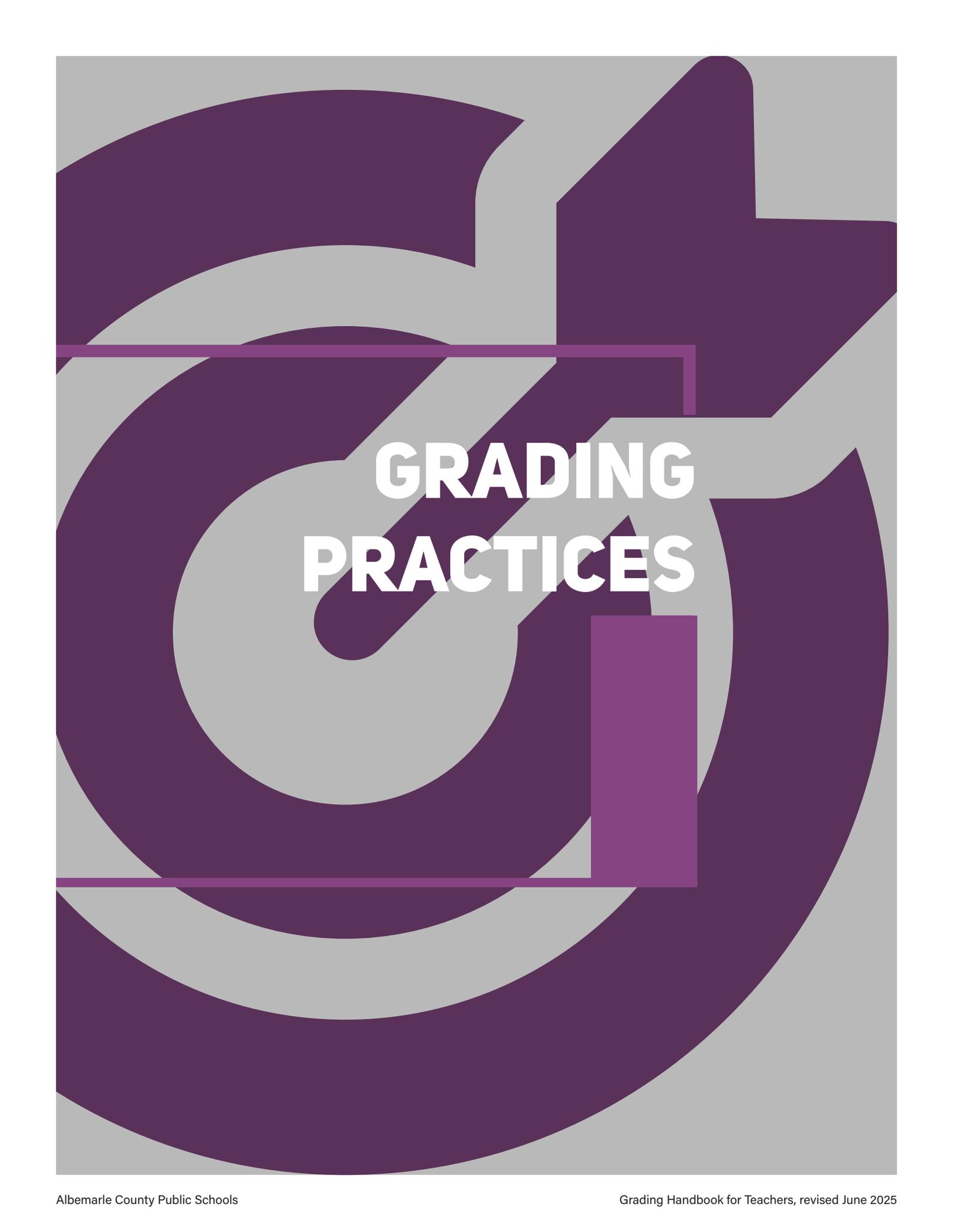
GRADING PRACTICES

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

The school division's academic achievement program recognizes all graduating seniors who earn an unweighted 3.0 grade point average (GPA) or better during their high school career. The primary objective of this program is to recognize students both for their consistently high performance throughout their four years of high school and for the contributions so many of them make to our high school communities.

We have three levels of academic honor recognition. The following designations are affixed to the student's diploma:

CUM LAUDE	MAGNA CUM LAUDE	SUMMA CUM LAUDE
Graduating With Praise for students whose unweighted GPA is from 3.0 to 3.4	Graduating With Great Praise for students whose unweighted GPA is from 3.5 to 3.7	Graduating With Highest Praise for students whose unweighted GPA is 3.8 or higher

EXAMS

Exams are not required at the mid-term or end-of-course. Summative assessments will have a weight determined by the teacher/Professional Learning Community (PLC).

GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA)

GPA is determined by dividing the total grade points received by the total number of credits attempted.

GRADING SCALE

The division's grading scale is as follows:

GRADE	RANGE
A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	50-59

REPEATING A COURSE

All courses taken and grades earned are recorded on the transcript, including courses retaken. However, only the highest grade is calculated in the GPA.

TRANSLATION OF PASS/FAIL GRADES

Students receiving a "Pass" in a course designated as pass/fail are credited with completion of the course, but the grade from such a course is not included in the calculation of the GPA. Students receiving a "Fail" in a pass/fail course receive a grade point of 0, which is included in calculations of the GPA.

WEIGHTED GRADES

All courses with Advanced Placement (AP), Dual Enrollment (PVCC or JMU), Honors, and International Baccalaureate (IB) designations are weighted using the scale below. Additionally, beginning with students entering 9th grade in the 2022-23 school year, students will earn a weighted credit for the third and fourth Career & Technical Education (CTE) courses they take within a CTE Career Cluster as well as many level 3 and level 4 elective courses. Weighted electives are identified within their course descriptions.

GRADE	UNWEIGHTED GPA	WEIGHTED GPA
A	4	5
B	3	4
C	2	3
D	1	2
F	0	0

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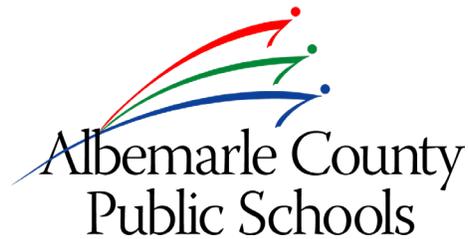
VISION

Our learners are engaged in authentic, challenging, and relevant learning experiences, becoming lifelong contributors and leaders in our dynamic and diverse society.

MISSION

Working together as a team, we will end the predictive value of race, class, gender, and special capacities for our children's success through high-quality teaching and learning for all. We seek to build relationships with families and communities to ensure that every student succeeds.

We will know every student.

VALUES

Equity: We will provide every student with the level of support necessary to thrive.

Excellence: We will mitigate barriers and provide opportunities for every student to be academically successful.

Family and Community: We will engage with and share the responsibility for student success with families and community partners.

Wellness: We will support the physical and emotional health of our students and staff.