

Two Proposals to Positively Impact Student Grading

High School Joint Leadership

Proposal 1:

Eliminate Mid-term Exams starting in the 2018-19 school year.

Positives outcomes:

1. Increases instructional time - time is gained from exam days as well as “review” activities allowing for more higher level thinking tasks and the time needed for them.
2. Reduces stress on students.
3. Removes the artificial breaks in learning the curriculum and gives teachers/departments more freedom to assess students on appropriate timelines.
4. Reduces potential opportunities for academic integrity violations created by common midterms given to students at different points in an exam schedule.
5. Eliminates the “crunch” of covering material in January prior to an arbitrary semester end date and the negative impact of cancelled school days.
6. Smaller common assessments are easier to design and gain consensus among department members than a large common mid-term.

Proposal 2.

Eliminate quarterly averages and composite grading in favor of a cumulative grading system.

<i>Old System to be eliminated:</i>	<i>New system proposed:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each quarter 20%• Midterm and Final 10% each• 20/20/10/20/20/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grade in progress displayed throughout year 80%• A final assessment 20%• 80/20

Positive Outcomes:

1. Indicates a student's level of achievement in the course more accurately. In-progress grade that is cumulative tells student and parent exactly where they stand. Quarter grades re-set every 45 days and give no indication of the relationship to other grades earned at other points in the year.
2. Diminishes inconsistent and disproportional weights of summative assessments created by averaging marking periods. For instance, 1-2 summatives in MP2 are worth 20%, and 4-5 assessments in MP3 are also 20%. This devalues the MP3 assessments and over-values the MP2 assessments.
3. Allows teachers to appropriately give weight to assessments later in the year that more accurately measure mastery of course objectives. In our current system, the first marking period grade is worth the same weight as marking periods 2, 3 and 4, even though students are just learning the new content and skills of the course.
4. Creates less student panic (or over-celebration) on the impact of one grade. The cumulative grade will be less impacted than the smaller window of the quarter.

Example*:

Let's say a student 'bombs' the first quarter due to stress/anxiety/personal issues. Then he pulls it together and does really well for three quarters with increasing success and confidence. The teacher assigns more large assessments later in the year than earlier. In composite grading, you see massive swings in the grade, but the final grade feels like a "shock" because of the impact of averaging in the first quarter. In cumulative grading, the student sees the impact of each successful performance in watching the average move in a positive direction.

	MP 1	MP2	MP3	MP4	Exams	FINAL
Composite	41 F	85 B	91 A-	91 A-	85 B	77.6 C+
Cumulative	41 F	71 C-	81 B-	84 B	85 B	84 B

*based on grades on summatives extracted from an actual English 12 course.

Research conducted:

1. Actual summative assessments, weights, and student scores were extracted from a variety of courses from different departments from the 2016-17 school year.
2. Using the "Staging" area of Infinite Campus, this data was inputted into two separate grading systems:
 - a. A Composite system that replicates our current system (20-20-10-20-20-10)
 - b. A Cumulative system that used the proposed 80/20 breakdown
3. RESULTS:
 - a. For students who performed consistently across the year, there was little to no difference in their Final Mark between the two gradebooks.
 - b. When students performed poorly in one marking period, the Final mark was higher in the cumulative gradebook than the traditional one.
 - c. A number of teachers assign disproportionate totals of summative points in different marking periods. Cumulative grading minimized the large swings in grades that may be created by a few missed assignments or poor performances in marking periods with fewer grades.
 - d. In the cumulative gradebook, the in progressive MP4 mark was relatively consistent with the Final Mark for the year - which means fewer "surprises."

**Potential Challenges and Responses to
The Two Proposals to Positively Impact Student Grading**

Proposal 1:

Eliminate Mid-term Exams starting in the 2018-19 school year.

<i>Potential Challenges/Questions</i>	<i>Responses</i>
Large summative experiences like midterms are good for students and prepare them for college.	Departments still have opportunity to conduct such assessments because of the block schedule (85 minute classes) without an artificial timeline of the semester break.
Teachers will all give a “mid-term equivalent” all around the same time which will be difficult for students.	Since units can be assessed at more natural time, not all classes should be using the same few days or week. If this does occur, we can create a schedule based on dept.
Four half days of the exam schedule provides a “break” away from the regular schedule.	The instructional time gained allows for meaningful, enriching, and unique learning experiences that can deviate from “exam review.”
How will semester classes institute their final exams?	“Final Assessments” can still be given within the 85 minute period. It is also an opportunity to explore multiple ways for students to demonstrate their mastery of the material other than an “exam.” Semester classes in the second semester could take a similar approach and use the 2 hour exam period for another activity.
Why have finals if we eliminate midterms? (the proposal would not impact the current exam schedule for FINALS in June)	Final assessments provide opportunity for students to demonstrate what they have learned over the entirety of the course. It’s a chance to synthesize all the learning taken place.
What do we do with the 10% of the grade that was assigned to Midterms?	See Proposal 2

Proposal 2.

Eliminate quarterly averages and composite grading in favor of a cumulative grading system.

<i>Potential Challenges/Questions</i>	<i>Responses</i>
How will we report grades to students and parents if there is always a “grade in progress” and no marking periods?	Families already have access to all grades at all times. In addition, we will still have the ability to “post” grades at established intervals (every 45 days). Report cards will just reflect the cumulative grade instead of the grade of that term.

What about reporting grades to colleges at the semester mark for seniors?	We can easily establish a benchmark date at which time we will “post” a grade based on the midway point in the year. These can be reported to families and to colleges. We will need to make sure all teachers of seniors are aware.
It is helpful for teachers to have a “deadline” (like a MP) to get grades “in.”	Feedback is only effective if it is timely. Guidelines could be established for the grading and returning of assessments.
How will students who transfer during the school year be graded?	We will have to establish a common approach - For example: students will be issued a grade based on what was reported from sending school weighted the same as the work up to that point in the year in the new class.
What does the final look like if there is no midterm? Does it include material from all year?	Departments will have to rethink the format and purpose of the “final assessment.”
20% is too much weight for the final.	a. The “Exams” in our current system (midterm and final) are worth a collective 20% of the grade. In semester courses, the exam is 20% of the grade. <u>The proposal is consistent with current practice.</u> b. See the math: See <i>Table 1</i> below. Grades are not impacted too dramatically.

Table 1:

	Scenario#1	Scenario#2	Scenario #3	Scenario #4
<i>Summatives 80%</i>	95 A	85 B	60 D	75 C
<i>Final “assessment” grade 20 %</i>	70 C-	65 D	95 A	50 F
<i>Final grade</i>	90 A-	81 B-	67 D+	70 C-

Notice - Final assessment grades that differ substantially from course grade does not impact final grade too drastically.

Statistical analysis was done and it was determined that with an 80/20 split, students would need to have a FIFTY (50) point differential between the whole term grade (80%) and the final assessment (20%) to drop the grade a whole letter grade.

For example: If a student had an 85 average for the class, they would need a 35 on the final to drop their grade to a 75.