

November 8, 2018

Dear Warde families and students:

With our first term under cumulative grading having ended last Friday, November 2nd, we want to take some time to review the process and preview what comes next. As we all know, undertaking something new, especially something meaningful and important, naturally generates questions. Our goal is that, by providing the information below, we facilitate a more universal understanding.

To start, let's define a few key terms you'll hear and see consistently.

Cumulative Grading	An approach that no longer uses averaged quarters or marking periods to establish a final grade. Instead, the grade is built throughout the year as one continual average. The student work assessed from throughout the year represents 80% of the final course grade; the remaining 20% represents the student's achievement on the course's final assessment.
Term	Given that traditionally averaged marking periods no longer exist, we'll use the word TERM to represent an amount of time from which we'll report out on student progress. We'll follow the same approximate timeline as the old quarters system, but you'll see the following when we report out on student progress: Term 1, Term 2, Term 3, and Term 4.
Summative	The part of the Infinite Campus gradebook that represents 100% of the student's grade. Assignments listed here communicate student progress on the skills and standards embedded in the curriculum.
Formative	A category in the Infinite Campus gradebook that gives valuable feedback in regards to the student's progress on how well they are practicing the taught skills and standards. Although this area does not impact the student's grade, the feedback here is invaluable when looking to understand their performance on summative assessments.
Behavior	Like the formative category, behavior assessments do not directly impact the final average. However, it is an important area because it provides feedback on your student's academic behaviors such as participation, preparedness, and investment.

And here are a few questions we thought you may have:

What's happening now?

Teachers are working on finalizing feedback on summative assessments given before November 2nd. They'll have all of that finished by the time our progress updates come out on the afternoon of November 13th. The grades you see then in Infinite Campus will represent the in-progress grade for Term 1.

What'll happen as the year progresses?

With cumulative grading, there are no more marking periods that average into a student's final grade. For example, the grade you see on November 13th is not averaged into a final grade at the end of the year as it has been in the past; instead, it's simply a snapshot of progress, and that grade will evolve until the end of Term 4 as your student's skills improve. Our teachers understand that the beginning of the year offers students the chance to learn and practice new skills, engage in rigorous tasks related to those new skills, and meet rising expectations. Therefore, many summatives will carry a greater weight as the year moves forward than they do now to reward more developed skills sets and to value the learning that has taken place over time.

When can I see my student's progress and where do I look?

You can view your student's in-progress grade at any time by logging onto Infinite Campus. At three points during the year--November, January, and April--we will post snapshots of that progress in order to determine eligibility for athletics and send reports to colleges for our seniors. You can view/print a report card by going to the Reports tab on Infinite Campus after November 13th for Term 1. We will let you know when you can see Terms 2 and 3 as the year moves along.

How do I interpret the categories in the gradebook?

Assessments in the summative category represent the entire calculated grade. With each opportunity a student has to engage in a summative assessment, the chance to improve the in-progress grade exists. If you see that your student is struggling on the summatives, check the formative and behavior categories. Although they carry no weight in relationship to the in-progress grade, the feedback here often explains why the student is having difficulties.

How can I support my student throughout the year?

Speak with them about the value of practice and their approach to it, and help them see that a heavy investment in all of the formative work will yield better summative results. If we concentrate on the process of building skills and knowledge over time, and we do so in a collective and collaborative fashion, we'll see real learning, and the final grades will reflect that.

We hope this information helps you navigate and more fully understand the process. As always, should you have any questions about your student's progress, please feel free to contact your student's teacher. We look forward to celebrating our students' successes throughout the year.