



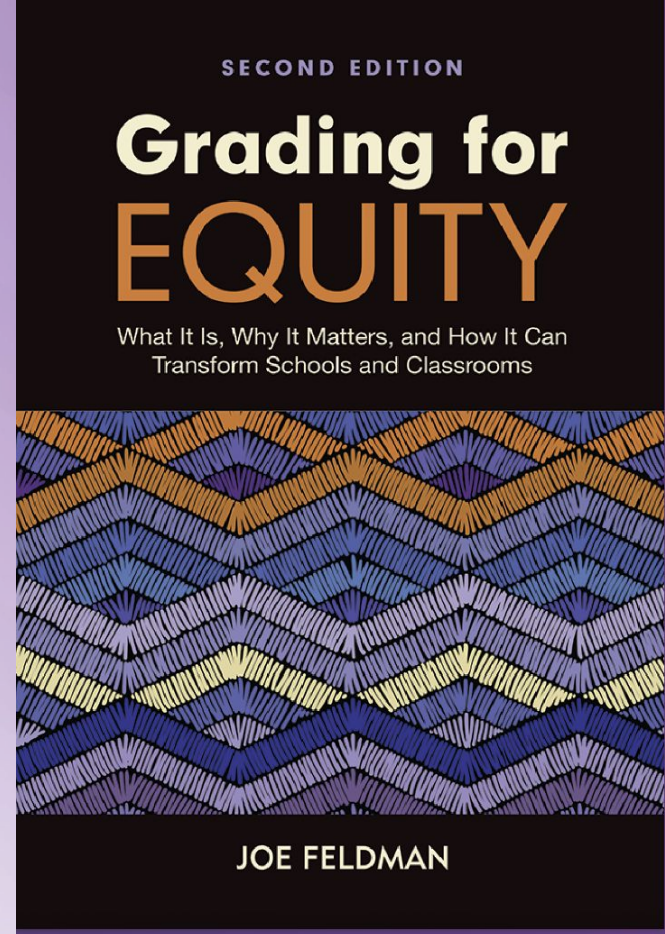
# Grading Committee Report and Recommendations

*Educating the whole child for personalized success*

# Review Process

- Questions about district grading practices made from a community member and student prompted discussion.
- The Board of Education called for a review of their concerns.
- The 2023-24 District Priorities included a review of current district grading practices and current research and best practices
- Make recommendations to inform Policy 8101
- Established grading committee: Admin, TLs, Counselors, Community Member, Student
  - Committee met from 4-6 pm on 10/16, 11/13, 12/11, 2/5

- **Conducted book study - Grading for Equity - with Admins, Teacher Leaders, Committee and interested staff.**
- **Read numerous articles**
- **Discussed with teams and teachers during TL team meetings, faculty meetings and Superintendent Conference Days**



## The 5 Burning Questions for Districts on Grading Reforms



By [Evie Blad](#) — March 06, 2024 ⌚ 5 min read



### The Case Against the Zero

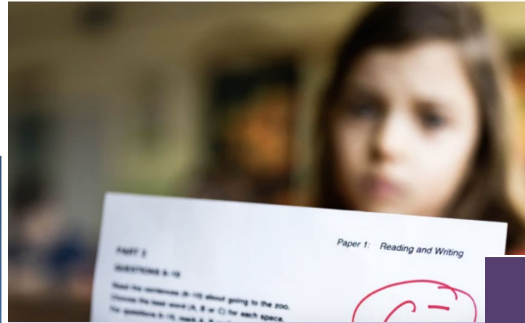
Even those who subscribe to the “punishment” theory of grading might want to reconsider the way they use zeros, Mr. Reeves suggests.

BY DOUGLAS B. REEVES

**T**HIS IS not a trick question. If you are using a grading scale in which the numbers 4, 3, 2, 1, and 0 correspond to grades of A, B, C, D, and F; then what number is awarded to a student who fails to turn in an assignment? If you responded with a unanimous chorus of “zero,” then you may have a great deal of company. There might be a few people who are familiar with the research that asserts that grading as punishment is an ineffective strategy,<sup>1</sup> but many of us curmudgeons want to give the miscreants who failed

## What Traditional Classroom Grading Gets Wrong

By [Joe Feldman](#) — January 23, 2019 ⌚ 6 min read

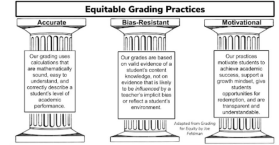


### Rethinking Retakes

The school's new testing policy

Arianna Hellman, Photo Editor • January 12, 2024

The county's push for more equitable practices in schools has resulted in the implementation of a new test retake policy. It stems from a book called “Grading for Equity: What It Is, Why It Matters, and How It Can Transform Schools and Classrooms” by Joe Feldman. The goal of the retake policy is for students to focus more on understanding the content in their classes rather than solely focusing on their grades. However, teachers are finding that it often has the opposite effect and creates more work for teachers and students.



The county's new retake policy is based on three pillars from the book “Grading for Equity, What It Is, Why It Matters, and How It Can Transform Schools and Classrooms” by Joe Feldman.

“I don't think it's actually beneficial for students,” said Mr. Jim Zarro, a math teacher at the school. “[I] tried retakes a long time ago, and I found that students ... either did worse or if they did better, it was only a couple of points better. It ended up being a lot of extra work on both teachers and students with little to no benefit.”

## The Case Against

*It's time to abandon grading scales that distort the accuracy, objectivity, and reliability of*



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main purpose of such reports was to inform students when they had demonstrated mastery of the current performance

## Why Focusing on Grades Is a Barrier to Learning

Instead, Lean into Experimentation, Discovery, and Students' Innate Desire to Learn

by [Gerald E. Knesek](#)

April 25, 2022

From "Grading For Equity" by Joe Feldman

## Extrinsic Rewards and Punishments

**Intrinsic motivation is more effective than extrinsic motivation, especially when it comes to learning**

- *Undermine intrinsic motivation*
- *Reduce creative & critical thinking*
- *Increase unethical behavior*
- *Encourage people to focus on short-term impact rather than on long-term results*

**Teaches students to be "Near-Sighted"**

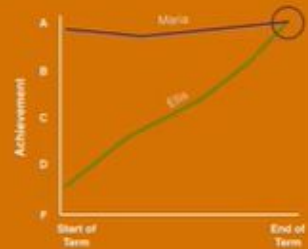
**Intrinsic motivation is more effective than extrinsic motivation, especially when it comes to learning**

**Low grades do not motivate students to work harder or learn more**

**Growth mindset isn't just a talking point; it's built into how we grade**



**RETAKES**



	0-4 Scale	Letter Grade
Assignment #1	3	B
Assignment #2	3	B
Assignment #3	0 <small>(missed assignment)</small>	F
Assignment #4	3	B
Assignment #5	3	B

**0-4 Scale  
Recent Performance**

**Priya's final grade?**



# WATERVILLE CSD GRADING FOR GROWTH

## Accurate

Our grading uses calculations that are mathematically sound, easy to understand, and correctly describe a student's level of academic performance.

## Bias-Resistant

Our grades are based on valid evidence of a student's content knowledge, not on evidence that is likely to be *influenced* by a teacher's implicit bias or reflect a student's environment.

## Motivational

Our practices motivate students to achieve academic success, support a growth mindset, give students opportunities for redemption, and are transparent and understandable.

Adapted from *Grading for Equity* by Joe Feldman

# District-Wide Grading Practices by Area

## District-Wide Grading Practices



# Class rank weighs down true learning

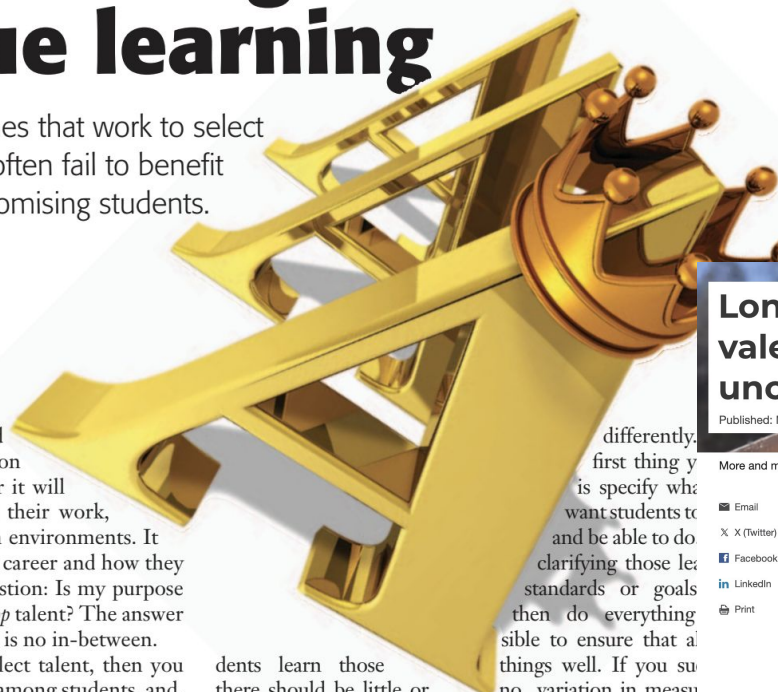
Teaching and grading schemes that work to select the most talented students often fail to benefit all students and to notice promising students.

**By Thomas R. Guskey**

As they consider reforms in policy and practice, educators face one basic question about their purpose. How they answer it will largely determine how they go about their work, especially in standards-based education environments. It also will establish the direction of their career and how they judge their success. The one basic question: Is my purpose to *select* talent, or is my purpose to *develop* talent? The answer must be one or the other because there is no in-between.

If you decide your purpose is to select talent, then you must work to maximize the differences among students, and, on any measure of student learning, you must try to achieve

dents learn those there should be little or student achievement and all students will attain similar



## Should Schools Have Valedictorians?

Some schools have abolished this traditional honor for the top senior

**VOTE NOW!** [WWW.UPPFRONTMAGAZINE.COM](http://WWW.UPPFRONTMAGAZINE.COM)

**YES** Recognizing the top graduating student is one of the few ways American schools publicly reward scholarship and hard work. Academic effort and achievement are all too often not at the center of high school culture, with friendships and athletics usually higher on the prestige scale: In the high school hierarchy, wearing an honor society graduation tassel isn't nearly as cool as wearing a varsity letter jacket. But being valedictorian is the one academic honor that does matter to students. We understand that athletes and performers merit special honors because their achievements represent hard work, focus, and motivation. So why shy away from awarding honors to students who succeed in academics?

**NO** The process of selecting a class valedictorian based on the highest weighted GPA harms more students than it helps. It pits students against each other in sometimes bitter rivalries. Stories abound of students gaming the system to gain advantage, friendships being ruined by the fierce competition, and students avoiding classes in the arts because even an A in an unweighted class can bring down their GPA. Outstanding academic achievement should certainly be recognized. But what about other qualities, such as commitment to service, compassion, integrity, and a sense of social justice? Where do curiosity, initiative, and creativity come in? Should students be selected based on these qualities?

**Selecting a single valedictorian hurts students**

## Long considered a high honor, the valedictorian tradition faces an uncertain future

Published: May 14, 2019 6:46am EDT

More and more schools are doing away with the valedictorian honor. Joseph Sohm from www.shutterstock.com

As college and high school graduations take place, thousands of select students will step to podiums to deliver their graduating class's farewell remarks at commencement ceremonies throughout the United States.

These students – usually the graduating seniors with the highest grade point average, or GPA – are recognized with a formal title: valedictorians.

Though the tradition goes back to colonial times, the validity of valedictorian honor is increasingly being called into question. A growing number of schools are changing how they choose the

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# Recommendation

**A Profile of a Waterville graduate should be developed, aligned with the NYS Blue Ribbon Commission, to promote consistent learning standards and outcomes for all district students.**

# Recommendation

**Non-academic behaviors should be de-coupled from academic grades. Habits of Learning should be developed Pre-K-12 to promote and measure 21st century learning and power skills.**

# Recommendation

The end of the 3rd marking period should replace the current practice of ending the final calculation of grades for seniors after the second marking period beginning with the 2024-25 school year.

**Rationale:** The final calculation of senior grades for honor recognitions should occur as late as possible in the school year to keep students engaged, and ensure student learning and effort continues as close to graduation as possible.

# Recommendation

The Jr/Sr High will continue to use Regents exams as the final. However, beginning with the 24-25 school year, final exams will be worth 10% of the final course grade. Midterm examinations will be added valued at 10% of the total final grade. Marking periods 1,2,3 & 4 will each be worth 20%.

# Recommendation

**Rationale:** Using the Regents as the final will continue to motivate students to take the exam seriously. Reducing the weighted value will benefit many students as it will have a lower impact on their final grade. It will also reduce stress for students. Adding midterms - a comprehensive exam - will serve as a key check point half way through the year to determine students' progress to date on the course content. This will also help to identify areas which should be spiraled (reinforced) throughout the curriculum for the second semester.

# Recommendation

**Courses in band, music and PE will be included in the GPA beginning with the 2024-25 school year.**

# Local Districts' Practices

Districts included: *NH, Utica, Sauquoit, Westmoreland, Holland Patent, Madison, Hamilton, Clinton, Canastota, Camden, Oriskany, Remsen, Little Falls, Rome*

Include PE in GPA calculations: Yes: 6/14 (42%) No: 8/14 (58%)

Music: Yes: 14/14

Band: Yes: 14/14



# Recommendation

**Advanced Placement, dual-credit and honors courses should be weighted according to the following: adding 6 percentage points to the course grade GPA for AP credit, 4 percentage points to the course grade GPA for dual-credit courses and 2 percentage points to the course grade GPA for honors courses.**

**Rationale: Students should be incentivized to take our most rigorous courses. Currently, AP=5 pts and nothing for honors or dual credit courses.**

# How Extra Points Are Awarded In Local Districts

- **Advanced Placement Courses:**
  - +10 points-4 districts
  - +8 points-2 districts
  - +5 points-2 districts
  - Multiply grade by 10%=2 districts
  - Multiply grade by 1.08= 1 district
  - 2 districts do NOT weight courses

- Honors Courses
  - + 5 points=6 districts
  - +2 points= 1 district
  - Multiply course grade by 1.08=1 district
- Dual Credit Courses
  - +5= 2 districts
  - +3 = 2 districts
  - +4 = 2 districts
  - +10= 1 district
  - 10%= 1 district
  - X 1.08= 1 district

# Recommendation

**Class rank should not be published or made part of a student's official transcript beginning with the 2024-25 school year.**

# Recommendation

**Rationale: Is our purpose to select talent or develop talent?**

Ranking motivates the top students even though it also serves as a point of stress. It fosters unhealthy competition, even dishonesty, instead of a collaborative environment. It also leads to students selecting courses to boost their GPA and ranking. For students who struggle, publicizing class rank only further disincentivizes them and even discourages them from trying. Additionally, class rank hurts the majority of students who apply to colleges.

**Class Rank Weighs Down True Learning**

# Local Districts' Practices

*Districts included: NH, Utica, Sauquoit, Westmoreland, Holland Patent, Madison, Hamilton, Clinton, Canastota, Camden, Oriskany, Remsen, Little Falls, Rome*

## Class Rank

**No - 6/14 (4 districts do a combination)**

**Yes - 8/14**

# Recommendation

The long-standing district practice of identifying the Top Ten students of the graduating class be eliminated beginning with the 2024-25 school year in favor of an honors benchmarking system, which recognizes all graduating seniors who achieve final GPAs in the following bands

**90%+ - Honors,**

**94%+ - High Honors,**

**97%+ - Highest Honors**

The weighted average will be used for all honors recognitions.

# Recommendation

**Rationale:** With declining enrollment and some classes with 40+ students, it no longer makes sense. By having benchmark targets, all students are motivated to achieve their personal best instead of being pitted against each other to vie for a certain ranking in the class.



## Top 10 Data

<b>Class of:</b>	<b>Top 10 average range</b>
<b>2024</b>	98.63-94.93
<b>2023</b>	99.4-91.7
<b>2022</b>	97.4-93.27
<b>2021</b>	96-91
<b>Missing 2020</b>	
<b>2019</b>	95.72-89.92
<b>2018</b>	97.29-89.42



# Local Districts' Practices

**Districts included: *NH, Utica, Sauquoit, Westmoreland, Holland Patent, Madison, Hamilton, Clinton, Canastota, Camden, Oriskany, Remsen, Little Falls, Rome***

**Have a “top ten” = Yes: 6/14 No: 8/14**

# Recommendation

**The Valedictorian and Salutatorian recognitions should be eliminated in favor of the Highest Honors target of 97%.**

**Rationale:** Those students achieving the “Highest Honors” designation would receive the accolades and honors formerly reserved for the Valedictorian/Salutatorian. The achievement of standards becomes the goal rather than competition among students. Under this scenario, the school is not arbitrarily indicating a finite number of Highest Honors scholars, but is setting various standards for students to achieve. The motivation and quality of the students will determine how many are honored in any given year.

## Local Districts' Practices

*Districts included: NH, Utica, Sauquoit, Westmoreland, Holland Patent, Madison, Hamilton, Clinton, Canastota, Camden, Oriskany, Remsen, Little Falls, Rome*

**Have Valedictorian/Salutatorian: Yes= 12/14 No=2/14**

**4 out of the 12 districts announce the GPAs of Valedictorian/Salutatorian only.**



## Next Steps

- **Hold focus groups with graduating seniors to get their feedback on the recommendations**
- **Conduct Community-wide Thought Exchange to garner feedback from the community**
- **Bring back recommendations to the Policy Committee to incorporate into Policy 8101 with a target date of approving in time for the 24-25 school year**