



K-12 Equitable Grading Audit

District Leader Checklist for Designing
Grades Focused on Academic Mastery

District Leadership Forum

How to Use This Audit

Course failure rates more than doubled during the pandemic, reducing student confidence in school and their chances of pursuing postsecondary education. But lack of learning isn't the only driver of course failures. Up to 40% of traditional student grades include non-academic criteria that do not reflect student learning gains—including participation and on-time homework submission. As a result, traditional grading may inadvertently penalize underprivileged students who struggle to meet non-academic expectations.

Equitable grading is a highly effective yet underutilized strategy that improves student grades and minimizes grading biases. In this practice, districts remove non-academic performance from final grades so that final GPAs only reflect academic mastery. This audit is designed to help your leadership team benchmark your district's grading methods against best practices used by exemplar equity-focused districts. **Get started by following the steps below.**

1 Assess Your District's Current Grading Policy

- a. Independently or as a district leadership team, review the list of equitable grading criteria on the next page and reflect on how well your district upholds each one.
- b. Select one answer (*Yes*, *No*, or *Not Sure*) for each criterion.

2 Review Recommendations For Criteria Not Yet Practiced

- a. For criteria marked *No*, refer to the corresponding recommendations to learn how to transition to a more equitable practice.
- b. For criteria marked *Not Sure*, discuss with your team where gaps may exist and how to identify the missing information. Then, refer to the recommended next steps.

3 Determine Next Steps With Your Leadership Team

- a. Incorporate at least two to three new criteria into your grading policy in the coming year. Ultimately, set a goal to practice at all eight criteria in the next two years to develop a comprehensive approach that is not outdated or contradictory.
- b. Assign owners to lead the implementation of each next step by writing their names below each relevant recommendation.

Tips for Sustaining Equitable Grading



Recruit teacher leaders or department chairs to pilot strategies and use their feedback to improve district-wide implementation.



Host a school leader workshop to introduce leaders to equitable grading and build buy-in among school leaders first.

Equitable Grading Audit for District Leaders

Key Criteria

Recommended Next Steps

<p>1 Our district reports academic and non-academic performance (<i>behavior, participation, effort</i>) separately on report cards.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure	<p>Configure the LMS or grade book to include two sections on student report cards: one for academic grades only reporting learning mastery and one for non-academic performance. This reduces the chances that subjectivity infiltrates academic course grades. Refer to these examples to get started.</p>
<p>2 Final course grades or GPAs on transcripts are calculated only from academic grades.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure	<p>Set the expectation that teachers only report scores from academic mastery assignments and omit non-academic factors (i.e., <i>completion, timeliness</i>). This ensures that subjective elements—such as behavior and participation—do not interfere with final GPAs.</p>
<p>3 Teachers provide students at least two opportunities to demonstrate mastery.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure	<p>Set the expectation that teachers assign final grades only after students receive at least two opportunities to demonstrate learning. This ensures scores reflect true academic mastery rather than the <i>time</i> it takes for students to get there.</p>
<p>4 Our district provides equitable grading PD or training to teachers every year.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure	<p>Reserve at least two training opportunities around equitable grading, either during PLCs or existing teacher PD days. One way to start is to use PD resources from Grading for Equity. This training helps scale consistent, equitable grading practices across classrooms.</p>
<p>5 Teacher coaching conversations review and reinforce equitable grading practices that the district prioritizes.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure	<p>Incorporate at least one of the equitable grading practices above into informal observation rubrics or look-for documents. This increases the overall use of fair grading practices and signals that equity remains a district priority.</p>
<p>6 Our district's formal grading policy includes a section on equitable grading.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure	<p>Include your district's approach to equitable grading in your district grading policy and provide specific examples. Use student-friendly language to ensure the broader school community understands it.</p>
<p>7 Our grading policy is published and easy to find on our district website.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure	<p>Post your district grading policy on the district website two clicks from the homepage. This allows students & parents to easily search and reference your grading policy at any time.</p>
<p>8 Our leadership team reviews and discusses our equitable grading policy at least once a year.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure	<p>Host an annual equitable grading meeting with your leadership team to revisit this audit and reinforce the district's commitment to equitable grading.</p>



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