

Grading Procedures in the Pittsburgh Public Schools

At the beginning of the 2008-09 school year, the District mandated that all teachers employ a 50% minimum grading procedure where students' assignment scores (i.e., all types of tasks, including tests) recorded in the roll book could not be lower than 50% of the assignment's total value.

The 50% minimum procedure was put in place to address the effect of zeros and very low scores on a student's overall grade. Mathematically, zeros have the effect of lowering a student's grade more significantly than a score of 90% to 100% can raise it because of the cut-off points for letter grades on the 100% scale. The intent of the procedure was to create equity among all the possible assignment grades when calculating a final report period grade.

The 50% minimum procedure has been in place at the elementary level for some time. It was a new grading procedure for many teachers at the secondary level and, in a short time, became controversial because students were refusing to do some work--instead opting for a 50% score. Additionally, only lower grades were rising. Teachers saw this as grade inflation for students who did not deserve the higher grades.

To address the inherent problems with the procedure, Dr. Jerri Lippert, Chief Academic Officer for Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development, and PFT Vice President Mary Van Horn convened a 20-member committee of teachers, principals, central office administration, and PFT staff to find a solution. Meetings were held in December, January and February.

The grading committee analyzed several proposals including modifications to the 50% minimum policy. By consensus, the committee reached agreement on a 5-point grading procedure that will be piloted in three schools during the fourth report period.

All schools (except the three pilot schools during the fourth report period) will use a modified 50% minimum grading procedure for the second semester. The modification allows teachers to enter a zero for any assignment that was not completed due to a student's refusal to do work.

The 5-point grading procedure is being piloted to determine deficiencies in the procedure, to repair the deficiencies and to determine if Integrate can easily handle the procedure.

More information will be available on this website as the piloting of the 5-point grading procedure unfolds during the 4th report period of this school year.