

# Equitable Grading – A Guide for Families

Q: What’s the concern with the traditional grading scale?

A: An equitable grading scale using percentages would look like this:

100 to 90 A    90 to 80 B    80 to 70 C    70 to 60 D    60 to 50 F  
 50 to 40 G    40 to 30 H    30 to 20 I    20 to 10 J    10 to 0 K

In a traditional grading scale, an F is not an equitable increment, as it represents a 59.99 point spread on the scale, while a 9.99 point increment is used for each of the other grades (A, B, C, and D). An F should not represent 6 increments on the grading scale or a score of zero.

Some of Alta’s teachers have chosen to move to a scaled scoring system, using a one-point increment for each letter grade to emulate the GPA system. Others have chosen to make their grading more equitable by utilizing 50 as the new zero. The next few sections attempt to answer questions you may have about this change.

Q: Why are we starting at a “50” for what used to be a zero on an assignment/assessment?

A: We know from statistics that adding a zero to a set of scores pulls down the mean of that set of scores (and the median better represents those scores). **Using zeros for missing student work creates statistical outliers that pull down the mean of the final grade. The result is a final grade that doesn’t accurately represent students’ academic performance.**

In Examples 1 and 2 below you can see that Student A has a higher mastery than Student B but, because of the use of zeroes in traditional grading, Student A has a lower final percentage than Student B. **In the third column using equitable grading, 50s are used in place of zeros for Student A’s missing work. The result is a final percentage that better represents their actual performance.**

**Example 1: Students A and B**

**Example 2: Students A and B**

Stud. A Trad.	Stud. B Trad.	Stud. A Equit.		Stud. A Trad.	Stud. B Trad.	Stud. A Equit.
100/100	85/100	100/100		100/100	85/100	100/100
100/100	75/100	100/100		100/100	85/100	100/100
100/100	80/100	100/100		100/100	85/100	100/100
100/100	80/100	100/100		100/100	85/100	100/100
0/100	85/100	50/100		100/100	85/100	100/100
0/100	75/100	50/100		0/100	85/100	50/100
<b>Avg. 66.66</b>	<b>Avg. 80</b>	<b>Avg. 83.33</b>		<b>Avg. 83.33</b>	<b>Avg. 85</b>	<b>Avg. 91.66</b>

The Example 3 scenario is more common and more impactful. Student C did okay but struggled a bit in their performance (scoring 68% in column 2). *However, because they missed one test they end up failing the class using traditional grading. But they end up passing the class if equitable grading is used. In addition, the 65% final average better represents their actual performance, which is the purpose of grades.*

### Example 3: Student C

Traditional Grading	Actual Performance	Equitable Grading
70/100	70/100	70/100
65/100	65/100	65/100
70/100	70/100	70/100
65/100	65/100	65/100
70/100	70/100	70/100
0/100	-outlier removed-	50/100
<b>Avg. 56.66</b>	<b>Avg. 68</b>	<b>Avg. 65</b>

Q: Aren't you giving kids half credit for doing nothing?

A: Because of the 0 to 100% traditional grading scale, it can feel like using a 50 for a zero is “giving” someone half points/50% credit that they didn't earn.

However, imagine a 50 point grading scale:

50 to 40 A    40 to 30 B    30 to 20 C    20 to 10 D    10 to 0 F

In the above grading scale, **any missing work should get the lowest score possible, which would be a zero. But we do not use this scale!**

An equitable grading scale should utilize equal sections per letter grade:

100 to 90 A    90 to 80 B    80 to 70 C    70 to 60 D    60 to 50 F

If every other letter grade in the traditional grading scale is a 10 point spread then an F should be from 60 to 50. **Again, any missing work should get the lowest score possible, which in this case is a 50.**

Q: A zero lets kids know that the assignment/assessment is missing. Won't a 50 be confusing to students, parents/guardians, and educators?

A: Yes, there will be some re-training that is needed. Teachers have been encouraged to use the “missing” option or other Skyward tools to let students and parents know that an assignment/assessment has not been completed. Teachers can also use these tools to inform students and families about the actual proficiency level if it falls below 50.

Q: What about students with IEPs or 504s?

A: Accommodations are used with students to help them meet the same standards. As always, modifications will be used, when necessary, to help support students who are not currently able to reach the same standards.