

Newton High School Grade Analysis

First Quarter Grades from 18/19 to 21/22 School Years DRAFT

This report compares the grades earned by all high school students in grades 9-12, as well as special programs, for the first marking period in the current 2021-22 school year and each of the past three school years. The report is created to identify trends over time in our grading and to analyze the changes from the adapted grading system implemented in the 2020-2021 school year. The grading system was adapted last year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic which necessitated both remote and hybrid learning, and to attempt to decrease the inequitable impact of the pandemic on student subgroups, including Black and Latinx students, students with disabilities, English language learners, and low income students, and to address the longstanding disproportionality of A and B grade distribution amongst student subgroups in our schools.

Grading Systems

The traditional grading system is represented in this table and is based on a percentage system. This system was used in all school years other than the 2020-2021 school year.

A	93-100%
A-	90-92%
B+	87-89%
B	83-86%
B-	80-82%
C+	77-79%
C	73-76%
C-	70-72%
D+	67-69%
D	63-66%
D-	60-62%
F	0-59%

Other grades include Incomplete (I), Medically excused (M), Pass (P), Withdraw (W) and Excessive unexcused absences (N)

The adapted grading system for the 20-21 school year was not based on a percentage system but was closer to a proficiency based grading system, with the following definitions of grades:

- A: (Advanced) Student engages fully with the material and with the classroom community/student has met most learning expectations. Student uses feedback to improve performance. Student reflects on growth. Student is able to independently and consistently demonstrate knowledge and mastery of skills.
- B: (Proficient) Student engages significantly with the material and with the classroom community/student has met many learning expectations. Some student use of feedback to improve performance. Some student reflection on growth. Student is able to independently demonstrate knowledge and mastery of skills though may demonstrate some inconsistency in different skill or content areas/student demonstrates mastery of some skills.

- P:(Emerging) Student demonstrates proficiency in learning with teacher and/or peer guidance and feedback/student has partially engaged with the class material. Student needs to show more consistency and independence in foundational knowledge and skill use/Student shows *emerging* use of targeted skills. Student attempts to/sometimes uses feedback to improve performance and reflect on growth.
- NG:(Beginning) Student shows limited to no engagement with the material and class community. There is not enough work to to evaluate the student's progress/elicit meaningful feedback from the teacher, providing little to no opportunity for growth, and there is minimal evidence of the development of targeted skills

These grade frameworks were not based on the same system as prior or current years, so the similarity of nomenclature (e.g., A, B, P) does not signify comparability. The adapted grading system for 20-21 is clearly denoted on student transcripts and was shared with students, parents and families.

Distribution of All First Quarter Grades

The following table represents the distribution of all first quarter grades issued for all classes for the past 4 years at Newton North and Newton South High School.

2021-22		2020-21		2019-20		2018-19	
Grade	Percentage	Grade	Percentage	Grade	Percentage	Grade	Percentage
A	55.1%	A/Advanced	74.8%	A	42.5%	A	40.0%
A-	13.9%	B/Proficient	12.1%	A-	15.0%	A-	14.9%
B+	8.0%	P/Emerging	12.3%	B+	9.3%	B+	9.7%
B	7.7%	NG/Beginning	0.8%	B	8.4%	B	9.1%
B-	3.8%	Other	0.3%	B-	4.1%	B-	4.4%
C+	1.7%			C+	1.9%	C+	2.2%
C	2.0%			C	2.1%	C	2.1%
C-	0.8%			C-	1.1%	C-	1.1%
D+	0.2%			D+	0.3%	D+	0.3%
D	0.4%			D	0.4%	D	0.5%
D-	0.1%			D-	0.2%	D-	0.2%
F	0.6%			F	0.3%	F	0.4%
Other	5.7%			Other	14.4%	Other	15.0%

Comparison of All First Quarter Grades

As the grade frameworks across these school years are not based on the same system, the grades are not easily compared. As noted above, the similarity of nomenclature (e.g. A, B, P) does not signify direct comparability. For comparative purposes, however, the A/Advanced grade in the adapted system would likely best correlate with traditional grades of A, A- and B+, and the B/Proficient Grade would best correlate with the traditional grades of B, B- and C+. Based on this approximation, the following percentages would be considered closest to comparable across years.

2021-22		2020-21		2019-20		2018-19	
Grade	Percentage	Grade	Percentage	Grade	Percentage	Grade	Percentage
A, A-,B+	77.0%	A/Advanced	74.8%	A, A-,B+	66.8%	A, A-,B+	64.6%
B,B-,C+	13.2%	B/Proficient	12.1%	B,B-,C+	14.4%	B,B-,C+	15.7%
C,C-,D+,D,D-	3.6%	P/Emerging	12.3%	C,C-,D+,D,D-	4.1%	C,C-,D+,D,D-	4.2%
F	0.6%	NG/Beginning	0.8%	F	0.3%	F	0.4%
Other	5.7%	Other	0.3%	Other	14.4%	Other	15.0%

Given that one of the intended impacts of the adapted grading structure in the 2020-21 school year was to account for the varied circumstances of students and families dealing with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic at that time, and to avoid the significant negative shift in grades seen in other districts nationally and locally, this attempted comparison provides data to analyze these changes. It indicates that there was not a significant decrease in higher status grades (A,B, Advanced, Proficient), and there was not a significant increase in the total quantity of lower status grades (C, D, P, NG, Emerging, Beginning) during the 2020-2021 school year. The significant decrease of grades captured by the Other category in 2020-2021 and increase of the P/Emerging range was likely due to many special circumstances, including illness, partial completion or irregular attendance being shifted from one category into the other. In the 2020-2021 and 2021-22 school year, there is also an increase of high status grades compared to the previous years. Grades in the Other category in 2021-22 also increased from the prior school year but also were significantly decreased from the 2019-2020 and 2018-2019 when the traditional grading system was last used.

Disaggregation of All First Quarter Grades by Student Subgroups

Given that an intention of the adapted grading structure in the 2020-21 school year and the ongoing development of equitable grading practices is to attempt to decrease the inequitable impact of the pandemic on specific subgroups, including Black and Latinx students, students with disabilities, English language learners, and low income students, and to address the longstanding disproportionality of A and B grades distribution in our schools, additional analysis is presented below. To assess the changes on these subgroups of students, the following disaggregated tables are provided, which attempt to compare clusters of grades across the two grading frameworks over the past four years.

Groups	A/Advanced, A, A-, B+				A/Advanced, B/Proficient, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+				NG/Beginning, F			
	21-22	20-21	19-20	18-19	21-22	20-21	19-20	18-19	21-22	20-21	19-20	18-19
All	77.0%	74.8%	66.8%	64.6%	90.2%	86.9%	81.1%	80.3%	0.6%	0.8%	0.3%	0.4%
Black	54.5%	58.7%	46.2%	39.6%	79.4%	80.2%	69.9%	63.3%	0.9%	2.1%	1.5%	1.4%
Hispanic or Latino	64.6%	63.0%	55.0%	53.0%	82.5%	82.2%	74.9%	73.3%	1.1%	2.3%	0.5%	0.7%
English Language Learners	57.3%	57.7%	56.8%	48.4%	71.6%	74.7%	75.6%	66.0%	2.6%	5.0%	0.4%	0.8%
Students with Disabilities	49.0%	53.9%	46.6%	44.1%	70.2%	73.7%	66.3%	63.9%	2.1%	1.8%	0.8%	1.4%
Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	60.4%	62.2%	54.0%	50.9%	79.3%	80.1%	73.6%	71.3%	2.1%	2.6%	0.9%	1.2%

This data indicates that gaps narrowed for these subgroups under the adapted grading system for the first quarter in 2020-2021 school year compared to the first quarter the previous two years. The narrowing of the gaps was particularly significant when looking at the percentage of grades in the Advanced and Proficient range combined when compared to similar grades in prior years. Under the return to the traditional grading system in the 2021-2022 school year, the higher percentage of high status grades for several subgroups continued, though the gap between all students and students of color and others reemerged. This data acknowledges that the adapted grading system did help to address the disproportionate impact of this pandemic being felt by students in certain subgroups during the 202-2021 school year, and that some equitable grading practices seem to have continued to positively impact grades for some subgroups as well. At the same time, disparities remain in grade distribution that should be addressed.

Summary of Grading Changes Overtime and Impact of the Adapted Grading System in 2020-2021

The purpose of this analysis is to compare first quarter grades for the last four years. The grading structure was adapted in the 2020-2021 school year to address the challenges of teaching and learning in this pandemic while adhering to the district value of excellence and equity. Many research-based equitable grading practices learned during that school year were also continued into the 2021-2022 school year.

Because the 2020-2021 grading framework is different, directly comparing it to other grading terms is imprecise. However, a comparison such as this allowed us to ensure that we were not negatively impacting students or creating further inequity, and are working effectively to mitigate the negative impacts of the pandemic on grades overall. It also allows us to continue to track grades over time and to see potential changes and equitable growth in high school grading patterns.

This data demonstrates that disparities in grades exist based on race, English language learning status, disability designation, and income. These disparities narrowed during the first quarter of 20-21 in comparison to the two previous years, which is in line with the goals described earlier. In the 2021-2022 school year, many of the gains in higher status grades for these sub groups were preserved, even as the overall percentage of high status grades also grew. At this point, we can see that the adapted grading system did not appear to harm vulnerable populations, namely Black and Latinx students, students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and low income students during the 2020-2021 school year. Additionally, under the return to the traditional grading system, some of the gains from last year have carried over to the current year and within individual teacher practice.

Further Steps

NPS should take the following steps moving forward:

1. Continue to analyze future grades in a similar manner.
2. Continue to solicit feedback from students, teachers, and families regarding the clarity of the grading process.
3. Continue to support district and school-based committees made up of school and district educators to engage in ongoing professional learning regarding equitable grading practices.
4. Schools should continue to engage teachers to assess their individual grading practices and identify effective practices that can be adopted more broadly for future years.