

Understand 2020-2021 grading options & how to choose for your student

To answer the questions above:

1. The district made an announcement, but without asking more questions, we can't know if the announcement is a good or bad thing for your student.
2. Since the deadline to act on the announcement is February 8, 2021, we have more than three weeks to gather information. [The exact deadlines are no later than 5:00pm February 8, 2021 (first semester) and 5:00 pm June 24, 2021 (second semester).]

Let's start with what the announcement tells us

Note: we have included below a glossary and other explanations of key terms and concepts for those less familiar with grading and transcripts.

Your student can collect the following information directly from the announcement?

1. If I take no action, teachers will use the normal A, B, C, or D grading scale. Those grades will contribute to my GPA as they normally would (see below glossary).
2. For the 2020-2021 school year, if I fail a course, I will not receive an F on my transcript, even if I take no action before February 8. This part of the new policy is automatic. The transcript will list the course and indicate that I did not receive credit.

3. The district considers it our paramount duty to do no harm. Rather than post a failing (F) grade, students will simply receive NC or No Credit for the course.
4. Students have the option to replace any A, B, C, or D grade with a “Passing” entry (represented by a “P”). If the student selects a “Passing” grade in place of a normal letter grade, that course will not be included in the calculation of the GPA.
5. The student will receive full credit for the course. That credit will be included in the number and types of credits that the student needs to earn graduation with a high school diploma. For example, a student with a 4.0 (or straight A) GPA before this year may choose to replace any B, C, or D grade with a P grade. That would mean that the class (or classes) with the P grade will not lower the 4.0 GPA.
6. Students will and families will decide if the student will replace a grade with a P.
7. Students will have until the deadlines listed above (about a week after the end of the semester) to make their decision.
8. Students may ask their guidance counselor for input into the decision.
9. A similar option of “P” is used by some colleges and universities during the pandemic to provide a reduction in stress for many students.
10. A letter from the Bellevue School District will be attached to all transcripts provided to colleges to explain “NC” and “P” designations.

What else do we need to ask or think about before making an informed decision?

1. Can we know exactly how the decision will impact the student years from now? In this case, the answer is no.
2. Help your student understand that often in decision making, there is no way to know the outcome. We can only gather information and

decide on the best path we can know at this time that could create the desired outcome with an amount of risk that we can tolerate.

3. Visit the admissions sites of each school/college/military academy your student is considering. Most institutions have posted guidance for grades and testing amid the pandemic. Each college has its own approach, so you should get that specific information.
4. Many admissions counselors also will take phone calls to discuss your options and their considerations. Ask at each school.
5. We know that admissions counselors appreciate students who can own a poor choice and demonstrate how they will accept the consequences and address the issue. Such learning opportunities make excellent material for college essays.
6. The pandemic environment is new to everyone and impacts everyone. Few concrete answers exist, but there is guidance available.
7. Each student should consider the factors in their situation in light of the comments on the university's admissions web pages, for example:
 - How strong are other elements of your application?
 - Can your essays describe problem solving and active steps your student took to make the best of the pandemic circumstances?
 - Has your student demonstrated leadership or service to others, especially during the pandemic?
 - Was your student required to take on unusual responsibilities because of the pandemic, for example, child or elder care, employment, household responsibilities, etc.?
 - How many classes and which types of classes will you consider requesting a "pass" grade?
 - Is it one AP course?
 - The first AP course?
 - A class that typically requires more hands-on learning?
 - A completely new subject area for your student?

- Is this a core requirement for your student's interest area, or is this an elective interest?
- Did your student intentionally take on what they knew would be a stretch course for them—without knowing that the pandemic would change the learning environment and support available?

We will continue this conversation through email and Teams discussion

We will gather advice from various professionals to guide students at each grade level. For example, grading decisions will likely impact juniors—who will send transcripts with applications in the fall—differently than freshmen—who have many semesters ahead before applications.

Take this priceless opportunity

Help your teen make the best possible decision given the choices and circumstances that the pandemic has brought to them. Help them understand what they might do differently another time to create a better outcome.

And then help them move ahead. You might consider this article from [Child Mind Institute](#) that can help your student live with the many disappointments that the pandemic has imposed.

This decision-making exercise also offers families an opportunity to discuss how powerfully a student can impact their transcript. Teachers don't give grades; they award them based on work and merit. Your student makes choices that determine that outcome.

Also remind your student that it just is **not true that one false step will destroy a future** and create a lesser life. That belief is one of several that create the oppressive anxiety that bedevils today's teens.

This is one of those priceless opportunities for you to step to the side and coach your student through a rich learning opportunity.

Key concepts in grading & transcripts

You also can find information in the district's [policies and procedures here](#).

GPA or Grade Point Average

- A numerical value that offers a quick summary of the average grade the student received from all courses taken during high school.
- Numerical value of each grade
 - A = 4 Excellent
 - B = 3 Exceeds Expectations
 - C = 2 Meets Expectations
 - D = 1 Unsatisfactory
 - F = 0 Failure to meet course requirements
 - GPA Calculation
- The average is calculated by dividing the sum of the grades earned (based on the scale above) by the number of courses taken.
 - For example:
 - A student who earns all Bs (3 points each) for 56 courses taken throughout high school (7 courses per semester) would have a GPA of 3.0.
 - A student who earned:
 - 14 As for 4 pts each = 56 pts
 - 14 Bs for 3 pts each = 42 pts
 - 14 Cs for 2 pts each = 28 pts
 - 13 Ds for 1 pt each = 13 pts
 - 1 F for 0 points = 0

- Equals 139 grade points divided by 56 courses or a GPA of 2.48 which is an average among all the courses of C grades.
- The number of courses included the course that received an F despite not adding to the grade points.

Transcript

- This official record of credits earned includes the name of the course, the grade earned in each course, and the number of credits granted for the course.
- Colleges, some employers, etc. may request that a student submit a transcript with an application.
- The school district will only release a transcript to the student or the guardian. The student may direct that the transcript be forwarded directly to another school or an employer.
- Generally, high school classes earn 0.5 credit per semester and 1 credit per year.
- The credits earned for each course is included in the [Course Catalog](#) on the district website.