

## **Outcome Based Grading and Reporting Best Practices Position Paper** **Title: Incomplete Work**

### **Definition:**

This paper refers to assigning a mark of zero when an assignment, project, exam or other summative evidence is not handed in, is incomplete or is missed.

### **Beliefs:**

1. The primary purpose of communicating student achievement is to communicate a student's level of performance based on a program of studies and to improve learning.
2. The use of zeros and penalties for late or missing work should be avoided.
3. Grades should be based on clearly-defined, pre-established criteria, known to students in advance.
4. Grades should be based on evidence related to achievement towards learning goals.
5. Attitude, effort, participation and other behaviours should be reported separately (unless specifically stated as part of the program of studies – phys. ed. music, drama, French, food studies, etc.)
6. It is recognized that in some instances student work that is to be marked and given a summative grade has not been handed in, is incomplete or is missed. A "reluctant or earned zero" may be assigned at some point if a pyramid of intervention process has taken place and the required work is still not done.

### **Research Summary:**

1. A zero is seldom an accurate reflection of what a student has learned or is able to do.
2. The effect of assigning zeros is greatly magnified if combined with the practice of averaging percentage (100 point) scores to obtain an overall course grade.
3. Instead of promoting greater effort, zeros and the low grades they yield more often cause students to withdraw from learning and not do the required work.
4. Students blame themselves, but often feel helpless to make improvements, since the zero stays in the grade book forever.
5. The consequence of not doing the required work should be the removal of student time and privilege to get the work done.

## **BTPS Guidelines:**

### **Responsibilities:**

#### ***Teacher:***

**Grades will be assigned** as outlined by the program of studies from a body of evidence gathered. Grades should be based on clearly-defined, pre-established criteria, known to students in advance and be based on evidence related to achievement towards learning goals (program of studies).

#### ***Student:***

The student will be required to complete the work that is assigned by the teacher.

#### ***Schools:***

Schools will set up a process to deal with students who do not complete work, do not hand in required work or miss major summative tasks.

This can be facilitated through **an intervention process** that may include any or all of the following:

- learning assistance room at noon
- before/after school work time
- parental contact by the teacher
- parent teacher conference involving student, parent, teacher and/or administration

#### ***Parents:***

The parent should communicate regularly with the student and teacher.

#### ***Procedures:***

1. A distinction needs to be made between “formative” feedback and “summative” grades. Formative work may receive feedback to help students improve their understanding related to the learning goals (outcomes), but should not be given a grade towards their achievement level. This may include homework, practice tasks and/or activities that require scaffolding and revision for improvement. Summative work (major assignments, projects, quizzes, tests and/or exams) may be marked and recorded for grading purposes.
2. Every effort should be made to avoid the use of zeros when assigning summative marks.

3. In the event that a summative task has not been handed in, is incomplete or is missing the following pyramid of intervention may be followed:
  - i) the student may be given an opportunity to complete the work through noon hour, before or after school time or during class time.
  - ii) parents may be contacted about the incomplete or missing summative work.

As a last resort, if this intervention still results in the work missing or being incomplete a “reluctant or earned” zero may be assigned.

**Feedback:**

The Question and Feedback forms will be used to gather evidence of stakeholder support/concerns related to Zeros & EIS. All papers gathered will be used to inform the Board of Trustees in their policy and procedures decisions related to Outcome Based Grading and Reporting.

**Questions and Answers**

1. Can a teacher assign a mark of zero for summative work?

*Teachers should avoid the use of zeros for summative work towards a student's grade. Assuming the teacher has talked with the student, the student has been given an alternate time to complete the required work, parental contact has been made and the summative work is still incomplete or is missing, a teacher may assign a mark of zero as a last resort.*

2. Can a teacher assign zeros for incomplete or missing homework?

*“Homework” or daily practice should not be given a summative mark. Students should be given time for feedback and improvement before a summative grade is assigned. This would occur at the end of a set period of time of instruction, feedback, time for questioning and clarification and study to give students an opportunity for learning to take place.*

3. Does assigning a mark of zero result in a change in behaviour?

*Research indicates that lower achieving students are less likely to do the required work with the threat of an assigned zero. It is more likely that they will complete the assigned tasks when privilege and/or time is taken away.*

## 4. What effect does assigning a zero have on a student's overall grade?

*Using a mark of zero can significantly affect a student's overall grade when a traditional 100 point percentage scale is used. A zero disproportionately weights a student's grade.*

Example 1:

A student has 4 summative marks as shown below:

1 <sup>st</sup> mark	70%	
2 <sup>nd</sup> mark	75%	
3 <sup>rd</sup> mark	65%	
4 <sup>th</sup> mark	80%	
		Average = 73%

The student receives a 5<sup>th</sup> mark of a 0%.

1 <sup>st</sup> mark	70%	
2 <sup>nd</sup> mark	75%	
3 <sup>rd</sup> mark	65%	
4 <sup>th</sup> mark	80%	
5 <sup>th</sup> mark	0%	
		Average = 58%

Example 2:

A student's first summative mark is 0%.

1 <sup>st</sup> mark	0%	Average = 0%
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A second summative mark is 65%.

1 <sup>st</sup> mark	0%	
2 <sup>nd</sup> mark	65%	
		Average = 33%

A third summative mark is 65%.

1 <sup>st</sup> mark	0%	
2 <sup>nd</sup> mark	65%	
3 <sup>rd</sup> mark	65%	
		Average = 43%

A fourth summative mark is 65%

1 <sup>st</sup> mark	0%	
2 <sup>nd</sup> mark	65%	
3 <sup>rd</sup> mark	65%	
4 <sup>th</sup> mark	65%	
		Average = 49%

*Although the examples are simplistic, the effect of assigning a mark of zero disproportionately affects a student grade. In the first example, it drops the student average by 15%. In the second example it would take the student many passing grades to bring an average mark above passing. In both cases, the assigned student grade is not a true reflection of the student's understanding of the outcomes in the program of study. This situation is even more exaggerated if the student's marks are high and the student wishes to obtain an 80% honors standing. In fact, depending on the weightings, a grade of zero for a high achieving student may make it impossible for them to achieve a grade above 80% with an assigned zero, even if the rest of their assigned marks are above that level.*

**References:**

- Guskey & Bailey (2001) ***Developing Grading and Reporting Systems for Student Learning***, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- O'Connor (2002) ***How To Grade for Learning: Linking Grades to Standards***, Arlington Heights, IL: Skylight Press.
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- Wiggins & McTighe (2005) ***Understanding By Design***, Alexandria, VA: ASCD
- Marzano (2000) ***Transforming Classroom Grading***, Alexandria, VA: ASCD