

Assessment Inquiry: The Findings

Looking Back: A Year of Assessment Inquiry

Our initial questions:

- How are we using grades?
- What do they tell kids?
- What does it mean to meet expectations vs. exceed expectations in the middle school?
- How do we balance enthusiasm for the content and our expectations for performance?

Looking Back: A Year of Assessment Inquiry

Led to:

- Conversation about what grades mean in individual classes and at EPS
- Small-group discussions of
 - Canvas Issues
 - Tone-Setting and Grade Comparisons between Students
 - Exceeding Expectations
- Grade-level attempts to teach to the culture of feedback we said we wanted, with a shared vocabulary
- A decision to solicit student feedback about grades and our grading culture to see whether there's congruity

5th grade thoughts

6th grade thoughts

7th grade thoughts

What do grades mean to you? Your parents? Teachers?

Grades are a way to determine how you are doing in class, if you are really understanding the content that you learn.

They mean a chance to see how well I am doing in school and if I should be working harder. They mean to my parents that them paying for this school is worth it. And teachers are trying to find where we are as students.

To me, grades mean a lot. They basically give me conformation that I am doing very well in my classes and they give me a motive to work hard. I think they mean about the same to teachers friends and parents.

To me, grades mean how well you have done in a class, how well you have understood the material, how focused you are, and your behavior in class. It also means whether or not I will get a punishment from my parents at the end of the school year.

BUT:

They mean a hell of a lot- any time my dad sees a 3.5/4 on canvas he emails me why? why? why? To me they're like awful and not even accurate

What is the purpose of MS grades?

to learn so you know how to study in high school

Giving yourself a check on how you're doing in the class and how you can further take in information.

to let you know how you are doing so you can improve during HS

To tell you how you can improve and see where you are weakest and strongest.

It is to show you how you are doing in terms of managing work because when you get to upper school your grades will matter a lot more.

Grades in MS help you find your learning style and help you get a feel for how you learn and how you comprehend things. It's a good measure of knowledge in a class, but not a good measure of a person's characteristic or how they are behind their grades.

What level of pressure do you feel for grades?

not much from friends and parents or teachers but a pressure myself a lot

Grades are all my parents care about so there is a lot of pressure. Teachers care about what is on the paper not as much as the grade. I care about if I learn from my mistakes and so do my friends but at the same time since my parents care about grades there is defiantly a lot of pressure.

Parents: A lot. Consequences come as a result of bad grades.

I feel pressure to get good grades because bad grades don't make me feel good.

a 7.5/10 from parents, 8/10 from teachers, and 0/10 from friends. I pick friends wisely, I don't hang out with people who are going to judge me based off a number.

I don't feel much pressure from others, if any at all, but mainly from myself instead. I'm self-aware of my grades, and even as it may seem I don't care, I do. It holds a big value for me as a big chunk of representation of myself as a student.

I think that I am most pressured by myself I think my teachers are supportive and pushing me along but they are not forceful

How do you feel about sharing grades?

- Most students reported that they don't feel like they are pressured to show grades

i'm fine with it. if i get a good grade then i'm proud and if i get a bad grade then ill accept that i need to work and ill show my friends that and it can be funny.

It depends what grade I get. But usually, I feel fine with sharing my grades. However, I do have to be kind of cautious to not hurt anyone's feelings.

I don't feel comfortable sharing grades

if i am not doing as well in a certain class i don't really want to tell people that.

I am uncomfortable sharing my grades with other students, parents, just about anyone. A student should not be able to share grades with another student, but everyone knows there is no way around that situation. Everyone wants to know how they did compared to others and it can seriously lower people's confidence, make people uncomfortable and put them in a situation they do not want to be in.

Does competition around grades force people to think about cheating?

I dunno. Never thought about it. I don't think so.... but who knows.

None that I know of, but there is a chance.

Yes, but if they know that cheating is wrong, then they won't do it.

No, here I don't really think people care about or talk about grades.

Certainly not me, but I'm sure that someone out there has cheated due to competition around grades.

Sometimes yes. Due to pressure they wanna do good and may cheat, though i have never seen this happen

Yes, but i think everyone in our class are smart enough to know that you need to work for what you want.

I am very competitive but cheating should not be done. You can easily get an A if you study. If you decide to cheat for your rest of your life than you will not learn anything and you can't cheat when you are doing a job application.

Is a grade the best representation of you as a student?

- Resoundingly “No”

No, because if you tried your best but still didn't get the best grade doesn't necessarily mean that you aren't putting a lot of effort into it.

No. I think the best representation is how hard I strive to reach my goals and do my best.

As I said, the grade is a representation of your work through the trimester but there are flaws. I think that comments are a good way to have your teacher share what you can improve on and what their take of your class knowledge/behavior is.

Comments

- 98% say they read comments
- Most seem to find them useful, with a slightly larger proportion saying that comments on Canvas are more useful than trimester comments.

8th grade thoughts

What does a grade mean to you? Does it mean the same thing whether it's on a homework assignment, test, or progress report?

- Grades mean a competition, sort of--you compare with your friends to see who can get the best grade
- In some classes it's weird because the HW assignments will be worth more than tests and stuff. But the HW is full points or no points so it can impact your grade a lot
- My parents don't really care, they just say try your best and we'll be proud of you but then they really yell at me if I get anything below a B
- Traditionally a B or A was above average and that's a good grade. Now it feels like it's changed and an A is where you have to be to get into a good college; it's the threshold you have to be at to get into good colleges. If you got straight Bs it's hard to get into good colleges, even though traditionally B is supposed to be a good grade
- At EPS, because it's a college prep school, grades should be important
- Grades shouldn't be stressed as much. You can represent a lot about yourself without grades.
- Grades aren't a good representation of your learning. They're an indicator of how invested you are in assignments and tests. Tests are affected by stress. Projects are affected by procrastination. So you can get a bad grade and still have learned a lot.

What do you think a grade means at EPS?

- Sometimes we forget the really important part, that it doesn't really matter that much in middle school, so it's an opportunity to experiment around and people focus really hard on getting good grades but they don't focus on retaining information so they cram and don't remember stuff afterwards
- Grades are really stressful and parents freak out about them even if they don't know the whole story. I don't like the way Canvas works because parents can see grades and they get upset when they don't know the whole story
- Whenever my parents get the email from Canvas about a grade they bug me and get up in my business and it makes you more stressed about that one class
- Parents take grades out of context on Canvas because they don't know the whole story. They'll be super worried and want to talk to you about the whole thing. My parents and I started having discussions weekly about my Canvas grades. I don't really like it, but it's better than before because when I was stressed it was hard to continue with schoolwork
- I don't think parents should be able to look at Canvas. I think they should only be able to see your final grade instead of nagging you in the process of you getting up to where you need to be. It's annoying and it demotivates me and I get a worse grade because I'm trying to "show them"
- I agree that parents seeing grades can be stressful, but at the same time I see how it can be useful in middle school because it is the time that you are figuring things out so it could be helpful. But in HS they shouldn't be able to see this.

What does it look like when kids talk about grades?

- This school is awesome about everyone is accepting of everyone. But there are times in general where people (classmates) expect that you make a certain grade and if you don't, they're like "Ooo." It adds pressure. It happens especially in core common classes (ST3, LT3).
- People say things like, "Ooh, you got this many points off." Other people brag about being done or that things were easy, which bugs other people. Saying things are easy causes controversy in the grade. It feels like there's judgement attached--like, "Oh, YOU didn't find it easy? YOU aren't finished yet?"

What SHOULD it mean?

- There's a point when grades need to become less a parent worry and more a student worry -- about your path, not your parents'
- It should be an accurate representation of what grading in HS should be so grades in high school aren't a big surprise
- It should more accurately represent what your schoolwork is, not responsible action and that sort of thing. Grades are supposed to be what you're learning
- If all classes had the same scale it would help
- It's good they are different, because college profs will also teach differently and we need to learn how to deal with that and adjust
- Parents should ease up on things in US but still have access to the feedback. I would guess that people in my grade who want more independence might want less notifications sent to parents when in US.