



MONTGOMERY HIGH SCHOOL

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PAUL J. POPADIUK
PRINCIPAL

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

I am very excited to announce a change in our grade reporting procedures here at Montgomery High School. Starting in September, MHS will move from a four marking period system to semester grading (two marking periods). Student report cards will be posted at the end of the first semester (at the midpoint of the year in late January) and at the end of the second semester (at the end of the year in June).

The idea for the change was initiated at the request of our students and teachers. The MHS School Leadership Team, consisting of teachers and administrators, has been working through all of the details for the better part of this school year. Students have indicated that the end of marking periods are an extremely stressful time, packed with tests, projects, and papers. My Principal's Advisory Council, comprised of students from each grade level, has consistently shared concerns about the inordinate amount of stress during those four weeks. We have heard the students loud and clear, and moving to semester grading would eliminate two of those stressful weeks (the end of marking period one in November and the end of marking period three in March/April).

There is no solid rationale for having four marking periods. Historically, report cards have been physically carried or mailed home to parents four times a year to inform them on how their children were performing. Today, parents have ongoing access to their children's academic progress via Parent Resources (Genesis). As soon as a teacher posts a score for an assessment, parents and students have instant access. This access eliminates the need for the traditional, arbitrary ends to marking periods one and three.

Semester grading has many positive attributes. It eliminates two stressful periods for both students and staff. It eliminates arbitrary stopping points for assessments, and gives teachers the flexibility to move an assessment later if the class needs additional instruction. Also, supervisors will have the ability to communicate with one another to try to stagger long-term assignments between departments so that students aren't inundated in one particular week in November or April. Semester grading also aligns to what students will see when they get to college.

The School Leadership Team tackled some other issues while working through the semester grading process. First, no one assignment during a semester will be worth more than 15% of a student's final grade. This is very important to our students and staff, as it enables students who may perform poorly on a given assessment to still experience success in their final grade. Second, our supervisors are responsible for closely monitoring teachers' gradebooks to ensure that assignments are spaced out appropriately throughout the semester and graded in a timely manner.

Semester grading will be a positive addition for both staff and students. If you would like more information please see the attached Semester Grading FAQ.

Sincerely,

Paul J. Popadiuk
Principal

Semester Grading FAQs

- **What is semester grading?**

Semester grading posts a student grade at the end of each semester, twice per year (January and June) rather than at the end of each marking period, four times per year (November, January, April, and June).
- **Who does semester grading benefit?**

It benefits students by reducing unnecessary end-of-marking period stress; it benefits teachers by reducing stress and providing more flexibility with the planning and implementation of units; and it benefits both students and teachers by allowing for more flexibility with types of instruction and assessments.
- **What impact does this have on the weighting of my child's grade?**

The weighting of students' grades remains consistent with what we currently have in place. Right now, each of the four marking periods is worth 22% of the final grade, with the final exam being worth 12%. With semester grading, each semester is worth 44% of the final grade, with the final exam remaining worth 12%.
- **How will this impact college requests for transcripts?**

We will continue to send out midyear reports, just as we currently do. For the colleges that require a fall transcript, guidance will send the grade as of the specific date requested in the fall.
- **Why semester grading rather than a running record for the full year?**

Semester grading aligns with what students will experience in college and also aligns nicely with the semester courses currently offered here at MHS.
- **Will semester grading impact eligibility for athletics?**

No. The NJSIAA requirements align to semesters. Our current procedures do not need to be changed.
- **Are the majority of my child's grades going to be posted in the last week of each semester?**

No. Supervisors will be monitoring teachers' gradebooks and providing monthly reports to the principal. This will ensure that assignments are graded in a timely manner and spaced out appropriately throughout the semester. If you have a concern during the year, you can always reach out to the teacher or the department supervisor.
- **Does this impact I.E.P. progress reports?**

No. I.E.P. progress reporting will continue on a quarterly basis.
- **Will semester grading provide an opportunity for student projects to occur at different times during the semester?**

Yes. This structure will provide an opportunity to better stagger long-term assignments throughout the year, not just at the end of the marking period.