

## PERRYSBURG GRADING FOCUS GROUP HIGHLIGHTS

Six focus groups were conducted with Perrysburg teachers and students in the spring of 2025 - one teacher focus group and one student focus group was conducted at each building in grades 5 to 12. This document highlights some of the main themes from the focus groups along with examples of specific quotes that support each theme.

### TEACHER FOCUS GROUP HIGHLIGHTS

#### **Teachers agreed that grades should reflect content understand above anything else**

- “I think it's good for students, parents, and teachers alike to know prior to the chapter test, the unit test, where the kid stands on what they know so far.” (PHS)
- “I think [the grade] should reflect what the student has learned and what they know. What they can do.” (PHS)
- “I also think that the grades should be reflective of their knowledge of the content and not an assessment of behavior or executive functioning.” (PJHS)
- “Reflects their mastery or understanding of the grade level standards.” (HPI)

#### **Teachers clearly valued responsibility and effort and struggled with how to evaluate and report it**

- “This is a question—not an answer or statement—but I think about this a lot. I’m in agreement that the primary purpose of grades should be mastery of content. But when I look at the big picture of education, should our primary purpose, when they walk out this door, be the content they learned—or those skills right there that they can apply when they need them? Does that make sense?” (PHS)

## Teachers had mixed experience with and opinions about late work and retake policies

- “Yeah, so last year as a department, you were allowed to turn work in late - it was ridiculous - it was like the whole quarter. And they had been doing that for a while. I kind of said, like, hey, I don't know if it's the most valuable for them if we're letting them just wait till the last day and copy everyone else's work that they've already gotten turned back to them, and give them 100%. Because that also doesn't show mastery, it's not representing what they know, it's representing whatever it is. So then, we changed to giving half credit, the second it's late you get half credit, but then that turns into maybe you have behavior into their grade, but it's in the formative 10% like you said. So, it's not weighted heavily, but that was the debate, like, are we then including behavior in their final grade by penalizing them for late work?” (PJHS)
- “I think, as a freshman teacher, getting students from the junior high where they can retake anything, their grade doesn't tell me as much about how good of a math student they are coming into my class, because they can retake everything. I don't know what that retake process looks like, because I'm not in the same building. But we sometimes have students that do not qualify for, say, intervention because their grade reflects that they know the material. Then they come here, and it's clear that they don't know anything, but they've been retesting and working individually with the teacher, and the teacher's been adjusting their grade. So, that's very difficult to walk. You want to look at that grade and kind of get a better picture of where that kid falls.” (PHS)

### **Teachers differed on how consistent grading practices are/should be**

- “There are some subject areas that I think are very cohesive, there are others that are you're rolling the dice on who you get as a teacher, on how easy your grades are going to be. And I'll be blunt about it. I'm not going to point fingers or say names or whatever, but it is a roll of a dice on who you get as a teacher in some subject areas.” (PJHS)
- “You need to take a deep dive into each of the departments to determine: is every Algebra 1 teacher—do they have the same weight, or are they grading the same way? Does every Government teacher have the same weight, or are they grading the same way? Because you will see that we do not. Different departments can have different ways of doing things. I think how English grades—I don't understand how they grade a paper. I've never had to do that. So I don't necessarily think how they grade should be the same as Math.” (PHS)

### **Teachers were concerned about a “one-size-fits-all” approach**

- “Well, also, I worry about a one size fits all isn't realistic. I think it needs to be a little different in 5th and 6th grade than it does in high school. I just don't feel like it would be to have the same program laid out for all grades. I just don't think it's developmentally right.” (HPI)
- “Because what you teach and I teach and you teach, we're all different. And so, like I said earlier, I can't do what math does ... And so, that would be a fear for me is that we're all going to try and fit in the same puzzle and move different” (PHS)
- “The less district structure we can get, the better.” (PHS)

## STUDENT FOCUS GROUP HIGHLIGHTS

### **Students believed that grades show what you know AND help you make decisions about your learning**

- “Like if you got a bad grade on like a chapter of like, say for math, like I feel like then you just like go back and you would like, the grade would tell you what you have to study and then go look back on your tests and like what kind of sections you got wrong or, and then if you got a good grade, great” (PJHS)
- “I guess I kind of use grades to gauge it, how hard I should, you know, or how I should look at other assignments. Like if I do poorly, I think, "Oh, I should really try hard on the next, you know, big assignment." (PHS)

### **Students said they could get good grades even if they don't “understand”**

- “You could study, and even if you don't understand the topic, you could say, 'Well, I found an easy way to remember how to do this, but I don't really understand the topic very well.'” (HPI)
- “I feel like a lot of my knowledge ... for example, if we're talking about grammar, if someone gives me the word, I can give them a definition, but I can't give them the word or the definition just on my own. Or ... like a multiple choice test, I can get the correct answer if four options are given to me, but I probably couldn't give the answer if I just had to write out a short answer.” (PHS)

**Students mostly agreed that HW should be optional but differed on whether students would do it**

- “I think I would do it if I needed, like, if I thought I needed the extra practice. Like, if there was optional homework in a harder class, I would probably do it just to make sure that I know what it is.” (PHS)
- “I just think kids our age aren’t going to do homework if it's not a grade, which I don't think it should be optional because nobody's going to do it.” (PJHS)
- “I feel homework should still be a grade, but it should also be optional. Because for people who don’t do their homework but know it's mandatory, they just cheat off of other people. I feel like it should be not mandatory but optional if you want to do it because then the people who don’t choose to do their homework, probably on their test, they won't do so good, and then they'd maybe reflect, like, maybe homework does help me. If I do it and don't cheat, then maybe I'll get a better grade on my test.” (HPI)

**Students were vaguely familiar with “Portrait of a Jacket” and didn’t see the value in Jacket Way (as currently implemented)**

- “Yeah, [Jacket Way tickets] are always given to the students who don't do their homework, that do them one time. [laughs] They're not given to the people who actually listen and do what they're supposed to.” (PHS)
- “I feel if [teachers] know you behave and they know that you're a good student, they don't really give you a lot of Jacket Way points. For me, I've not gotten a lot of Jacket Way points. And I feel if they just know that you automatically follow that Jacket Way, then they don't give you points unless you do something really out of the ordinary. People who don't really behave, if they are quiet without being needed to be asked, then they get Jacket Way points for that. But if they know that you're already quiet and you behave, then you don't get Jacket Way points for just doing it.” (HPI)
- “I think the reason they barely ... give out Jacket Way tickets is because we're a lot older now, and this is basically expected of us to do the stuff.” (PJHS)

## **Students care about grades, but not because they care about learning (especially in HS)**

- “Like if I could graduate without doing any of the work, I probably wouldn't do any of the work, but unfortunately, that's what you need to do to get into college, so.”
- It's kind of like the only thing that like keeps me saying, "Hey, I need to get my grades up," Because otherwise it's like there's not really a point.
- “Yeah, it's kind of like that saying in college like C's get degrees because when you're in high school you got to get a good GPA to get into a good school but once you're in college unless you're going to a graduate program as long as you pass the class like, I don't know. Personally, when I get to college, A's are out the window.”
- “Sure, like learning's cool, but I don't know. I'm not really in a position to learn in a fun way, like I'm not going to be motivated to just go listen to a lecture for 50 minutes. Like, it's, I have no motivation to learn.”