

## **PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE**

At Deerpark Middle School, we uphold the belief that academic potential, whether in writing, mathematics, or other areas, can be achieved through hard work and persistence, embodying a true growth mindset (as described in *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* by Carol Dweck).

We emphasize expanding students' thinking and investigative skills. Grades serve not as endpoints, but as tools for growth. We encourage students to embrace challenges, learn from mistakes, value effort, and remain lifelong learners.

## **GUARANTEED VIABLE CURRICULUM & EQUITY**

We provide a guaranteed viable curriculum so each student has equal access to the same content and high-quality instruction, regardless of section or teacher. Every student will be taught by an effective or highly effective educator, with equitable access to knowledge and skills.

## **GRADING GUIDELINES & SYLLABI**

Grading guidelines for each course will be communicated to students and parents at the start of the year. At a minimum, this consistency will occur at the department level.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Our learning environment depends on honest effort from students, staff, and families. Cheating includes working from others' answers, unauthorized collaboration, possession of test data or "cheat sheets," unauthorized communication during assessments (including electronic devices or gestures), and unauthorized use of translators. Non-cheating behaviors—like unrelated side conversations or non-academic disruption—are excluded.

### **Consequences:**

- Parent/guardian and administrator or relevant support staff notification.
- A zero on the assignment, with the option of an alternate assignment or reassessment for a maximum grade of 70.
- A discipline referral and administrative consequences.
- Potential ineligibility for honor-based leadership roles such as NJHS or Student Council.
- Repeated offenses may result in suspension, DAEP placement, or a lower maximum alternate grade.

## **ALIGNMENT WITH TEKS**

All assignments must directly assess skills and objectives found in the Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills (TEKS).

## **PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**

If a student's grade falls below 70% at a progress reporting period (end of the 3rd or 6th week), the teacher must contact the parent to schedule a conference via in-person meeting, phone, or email. If contact fails, notification must be sent in writing via email or letter.

## **ELIGIBILITY FOR EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

Per District policy, any student receiving a grade below 70% in any class during an evaluation period will be suspended from extracurricular and UIL activities. The RRISD 2025–2026 eligibility calendar, located in the district secondary student handbook, details each nine-week grading period's end date and the effective dates for eligibility gains or losses ([roundrockisd.org](https://roundrockisd.org/sites.google.com), [cdn1.sportngin.com](https://cdn1.sportngin.com)).

## **FEEDBACK FOR LEARNING**

Grades must reflect student mastery, not just completion. Feedback should be:

- **Instructional feedback** (ungraded, timely, actionable).
- **Descriptive feedback** (written or verbal, indicating performance level and strategies to improve).
- **Formative scores** (recorded snapshots over time, leading into summative assessments).

Completion checks cannot be used as grading feedback.

## **FINALITY OF GRADES**

Grades given by a teacher are final unless they are found to be arbitrary, erroneous, or inconsistent with district or campus grading policy.

## **FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS**

Lesson plans must include:

- A clear learning objective.
- A closing task or performance provides instant feedback on student mastery.
- Clear success criteria (such as rubrics, exemplars, and anchor charts).

## **GRADE BOOK & HOME ACCESS CENTER (HAC)**

- Teachers begin entering one grade per week starting the first full week of school.
- HAC is updated weekly. Students should monitor their progress weekly, and are responsible for coordinating retakes or make-up work with teachers.
- Grades must be recorded within **5 school days** of submission; where extra grading time is needed, teachers must communicate timelines (no more than **7 school days** total).
- Late assignments receive a mark of "M," calculated as 0%, but late penalties cannot reduce a score below 70% unless the original grade was below 70%.

## **WEIGHTING & MAJOR PROJECTS**

- No single assignment can exceed **30%** of a student's average; no two assignments together can exceed **50%** of the average.
- Grading categories: **60% daily assignments, 40% assessments/projects.**
- Major multi-part projects must be communicated with the number of assignments they count as.
- Exceptions: Algebra, Geometry, and Spanish follow McNeil High School guidelines **50% assessments/projects, 50% daily work.**

## **HOMEWORK**

Homework extends class practice, deepens understanding, or builds proficiency. Feedback must clarify what was correct, what was incorrect, and how to improve.

## **INCOMPLETE GRADES**

Students have **two weeks** to convert incomplete grades to earned grades. If missing substantial work, extensions are possible with clear teacher communication. For UIL eligibility, students have **one week** to correct incomplete grades.

## **INTERVENTION PLANS**

Students below 70% at the 3rd, 6th, or 9th week are placed on mandatory intervention, including tutoring sessions.

## **LATE & MAKE-UP WORK**

- Late penalties must be pre-approved and cannot reduce a grade below 70% unless the initial grade was already below 70%.
- Make-up work is permitted for absences, truancy, or suspension. No penalties apply unless turned in past the teacher's deadline.
- Students are expected to arrange make-up work in advance for planned absences.

## **MASTERY**

Grades reflect how well students master content—not just completion. Completion grades are excluded from the grade book.

## **REDO/RETAKE**

Students may redo or retake failing work, except in academic dishonesty. Teachers set timelines and criteria. Grades earned outside UIL eligibility windows may not count toward UIL participation.

## TUTORIAL TIMES

Each teacher provides at least one 30-minute tutorial session per week before or after school, with schedule exceptions accounted for (e.g., meetings, duties). Tutorials must be posted visibly and online. If a student's teacher is unavailable, tutoring may occur with another content-area teacher; coordination among teachers ensures student access.

## DISTRICT-SPECIFIC UPDATES

- **Final exams** are no longer required for high school; semester grades now equal the average of two quarters (Q1 + Q2 or Q3 + Q4). Teachers still have flexibility to use projects, presentations, performance tasks, or earlier assessments that align with course objectives.
- High schools will **no longer observe finals week bell schedules** or attendance-based exam exemptions.
- The 2025-2026 RRISD academic **calendar** starts classes on **August 12, 2025**, includes professional development/student holidays throughout the year, and concludes the second semester by **May 21, 2026**.

## LOOKING FORWARD

We are committed to proven practices that support clear expectations, fairness, and student growth. This year, we continue to value traditional academic standards while embracing district innovations that support student-centered, meaningful learning.

Together, with open communication and collaboration, we will empower Deerpark students to become resilient, reflective, and responsible learners.