

Grades in the Upper School – A Guide to Verbal Equivalents

Catlin Gabel was founded on the principles of progressive education. One aspect of this approach to education includes a deemphasis on grades. Students are urged to focus on their individual progress, skill building, and the process of learning instead of grades or GPAs. (For more information about this philosophy, please see <http://www.catlin.edu/news/upper-school/grading-gets-a-d>)

Why verbal equivalents?

While Catlin Gabel teachers deemphasize grades, we recognize that colleges request grades, which do influence college admission decisions. Verbal equivalents function as a way to address college needs and give students a sense of where they stand compared with students at benchmark schools. Grades are recorded on student transcripts at the end of each year. Catlin Gabel reports grades to colleges during the college application process.

Communicating grades – emphasis on student learning

The school sends written reports to parents and students up to four times per year (once at the end of each term and once in the middle of each term). These reports include information regarding the *progress* that each student is making in his or her classes. They *may* include a verbal equivalent, which is also an in-progress assessment that is not recorded on a final transcript (though it may be reported to external institutions that request an in-progress grade before the end of a course). The only grades that are recorded in transcripts, and that contribute to the final GPA of a student, are those awarded at the end of each course. Students are notified of their GPAs at the end of junior year, but this calculation is not recorded or reported to outside institutions.

In addition to these reports, teachers meet with parents of all students during parent-teacher conferences in the fall and whenever there is a concern regarding student learning.

Students are in continual communication with their teachers to review day-to-day work. They receive ongoing constructive feedback on important assignments and class work. This feedback frequently occurs in the form of conferences and in-class conversations and can also include written feedback on papers and exams, and email.

Students who would like to know their grade at any other point in the year can ask the teacher. This opens student-teacher dialogue. At this time, the student can evaluate progress and identify areas needing improvement.

Our progressive approach to student evaluation encourages learning as a process through constant growth. Most importantly, it strengthens the collaboration between students and teachers.

Translation of verbal equivalents

| | |
|--------------------------|----|
| Outstanding | A+ |
| Excellent | A |
| Nearly Excellent | A- |
| Very Good | B+ |
| Good | B |
| Fairly Good | B- |
| Better than Satisfactory | C+ |
| Satisfactory | C |
| Less than Satisfactory | C- |
| Barely Passing | D |
| Fail | F |