

How Pluses and Minuses are Used in Council Rock

Plus and minus grades for individual courses are recorded on transcripts in Council Rock, yet the calculation of the final GPA does not reflect them. When a student receives his/her final grade in a course, the teacher makes the decision whether to include plus or minus, indicating the strength or weakness of the grade. Some teachers use them while others do not. The final grade is then recorded on the transcript, including any plus or minus. However, in the calculation of GPA, only the letter grade counts, not the plus or minus. This introduces inconsistency between the transcript grades and the GPA.

The district has been studying this issue and recently the Academic Standards Committee of the Board requested an explanation of the process.

For interim and marking period grades, the Home Access Center (HAC) calculates the letter grade and automatically includes plus or minus based on the numerical grade out of 100% (98-100=A+, 92-97=A, 90-91=A-, 88-89=B+, 82-87=B, 80-81=B-, 78-79=C+, 72-77=C, 70-71=C-, 68-69=D+, 62-67=D, 60-61=D-, 59 and below=F). However, when it comes to the final grade at the end of the course, the teacher converts the letter grade (without plus or minus) for each marking period to a point value (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0). A letter grade is assigned to the student based on the total point value over the four marking periods. It is up to the teacher to decide:

1. Whether to include plus and minus in the final grade (and therefore on the transcript).
2. The student's grade when the total point value is between two grades, such as a student having two A's and two B's for the four marking periods. This can be either an A or a B as a final grade, at the teacher's discretion.
3. If the final grade does not accurately reflect the student's work. In this case, an adjustment up or down can be made and a written explanation is included.

This final grade is then placed on the student's transcript, which will eventually be sent to colleges.

The high school administrators have stated that dialog is continuing on this topic. Citizens For Education feels that inconsistent grading practices introduce subjectivity unnecessarily and cause confusion for college admissions offices. Since the HAC software generates a numeric final grade based on a 100% scale, it seems that teachers should use that overall percentage to generate the final grade. If a teacher feels that the final percentage does not accurately reflect the student's work, they already have the ability to raise or lower the grade as they see fit, with a written explanation. It also seems logical that if the GPA does not reflect pluses and minuses, they should not be on the final transcript or, if plus and minus are reported on the transcript, the GPA should also reflect those grades.

CFE would like to see the grading system become more consistent so that all students are on equal footing and subjectivity is reduced.