



Statewide Uniform Grading Scales

By Molly Burke

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Grading practices have traditionally been addressed at the local level, but with growing concern about grade inflation and/or the use of grades for high-stakes purposes such as merit scholarships, some states now address grading scales in state policy. Typically, grades have been one component examined by college admissions officers – usually in combination with class rank (where grades are a major factor), college entrance test scores, coursetaking and extracurricular activities. Grades, however, also can be an important factor – and in some cases the only factor – in determining eligibility for state merit scholarships. According to an ECS analysis of state merit scholarships, of the 17 states that offer such scholarships, 12 use class rank (usually determined primarily by grade point average – GPA) or a combination GPA and college entrance exam (SAT or ACT) scores.

Benefits of Having Statewide Uniform Grading Scales

- Comparability of student achievement across districts.
- For state with merit scholarships, more uniformity between high schools.
- Students who move between districts know what to expect from numeric grades.

What Policymakers Should Keep in Mind

- Weighting of classes (students taking more or advanced classes are rewarded) can still be used in uniform scales.
- In some subjects, such as art and music, it is hard to use numeric averages.
- This can only go so far – uniform grading scales do not address how teachers come up with numerical averages (i.e., rewarding effort, rounding up, allowing makeup assignments and extra credit).
- Uniform scales do not address the issue of grade inflation across classrooms.

Summary Information

Currently four states (Arkansas, Florida, South Carolina and West Virginia) have adopted a statewide grading scale. In Arkansas and Florida, the scale is only mandatory for secondary schools. Tennessee has convened a task force to develop a statewide grading scale. The Tennessee state board has made a recommendation for a uniform grading scale for purpose of determining eligibility for the lottery scholarships. Arkansas, Florida, South Carolina, Tennessee and West Virginia all have minimum grade point average requirements attached to their state merit scholarships.

State	Statute	Grading Scale Details																		
Arkansas	ARK. CODE ANN. § 6-15-902	<p>The following scale is the Uniform Grading Scale and numeric values for secondary schools, and the optional Uniform Grading Scale for elementary schools. Grades earned in college courses are assigned the following numeric values when such courses are used to compute student grade point average:</p> <table> <thead> <tr> <th>Average</th> <th>Grade</th> <th>Quality Points</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>90 – 100</td> <td>A</td> <td>4.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>80 – 89</td> <td>B</td> <td>3.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>70 – 79</td> <td>C</td> <td>2.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>60 – 69</td> <td>D</td> <td>1.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>0 – 59</td> <td>F</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Average	Grade	Quality Points	90 – 100	A	4.0	80 – 89	B	3.0	70 – 79	C	2.0	60 – 69	D	1.0	0 – 59	F	0
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Florida	FLA. STAT. ch. 1003.437	<p>The grading system and interpretation of letter grades used in public high schools is as follows:</p> <table> <thead> <tr> <th>Average</th> <th>Grade</th> <th>Quality Points</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>90 – 100</td> <td>A</td> <td>4.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>80 – 89</td> <td>B</td> <td>3.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>70 – 79</td> <td>C</td> <td>2.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>60 – 69</td> <td>D</td> <td>1.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>0 – 59</td> <td>F</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Grade "I" is defined as "incomplete" and has a grade point average value of zero.</p> <p>For the purposes of class ranking, district school boards may exercise a weighted grading system.</p>	Average	Grade	Quality Points	90 – 100	A	4.0	80 – 89	B	3.0	70 – 79	C	2.0	60 – 69	D	1.0	0 – 59	F	0
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West Virginia	West Virginia Department of Education Policy 2515	<p>The grading scale for non-weighted grades:</p> <table> <thead> <tr> <th>Average</th> <th>Grade</th> <th>Quality Points</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>93 – 100</td> <td>A</td> <td>4.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>85 – 92</td> <td>B</td> <td>3.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>75 – 84</td> <td>C</td> <td>2.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>65 – 74</td> <td>D</td> <td>1.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>0 – 64</td> <td>F</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Average	Grade	Quality Points	93 – 100	A	4.0	85 – 92	B	3.0	75 – 84	C	2.0	65 – 74	D	1.0	0 – 64	F	0
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Tennessee	<i>Not in statute</i> State Board of Education recommendation	<p>The Tennessee State Board of Education Uniform Grading Policy recommends the following:</p> <p>For the purposes of determining eligibility for the lottery scholarships, Tennessee's Uniform Grading System should consist of the following, effective July 1, 2006:</p> <table> <thead> <tr> <th>Average</th> <th>Grade</th> <th>Quality Points</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>93 – 100</td> <td>A</td> <td>4.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>85 – 92</td> <td>B</td> <td>3.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>75 – 84</td> <td>C</td> <td>2.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>70 – 74</td> <td>D</td> <td>1.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>0 – 69</td> <td>F</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Assigning additional quality points above 4.0 for honors courses, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and National Industry Certification courses is not allowed for the purpose of determining eligibility for the lottery scholarships.</p>	Average	Grade	Quality Points	93 – 100	A	4.0	85 – 92	B	3.0	75 – 84	C	2.0	70 – 74	D	1.0	0 – 69	F	0
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For more information on state merit scholarships, see the following publications:

Carl Krueger, [Merit Scholarships](#), Education Commission of the States, May 2005.

Molly Burke, [Lottery Information by State](#), Education Commission of the States, updated September 2005.

Molly Burke is a researcher in the Information Clearinghouse for the Education Commission of the States.

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