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In most schools worldwide, grades are one of the mechanisms used to monitor student growth and achievement over time. A longstanding feature of the student experience, for many years grades were seen as the single point of success or failure for a young person as they prepared to consider post-secondary educational opportunities. Today, educators and families alike are aware that there is much more to a student than a letter or number could ever convey on its own. The following tips provide insight into how grades are important to a child's success as well as what other metrics and data points can be essential for representing that individual's learning journey.

Grades can provide access to post-secondary pathways worldwide

For many young people, grades provide a benchmark of performance that can be compared with other students outside of their educational setting. This can be particularly important when applying for post-secondary programmes. With over 90% of our students at HKA participating in the IB Diploma, we see first-hand the benefits of a grading system that is used and understood in countries all around the world. Grades that have been internationally moderated within a specific programme can help these institutions identify how a candidate might perform in their setting, regardless of that individual's family background, socioeconomic status or size of secondary school.

Grades help to benchmark and frame a child's learning journey

When a student completes a major assessment task, a grade is often used to report the level of achievement attained on that task. Grades are also often provided at the end of several weeks of learning, such as on a semester report card, to represent the level of achievement in a specific course over time. In both of these cases, grades can serve a helpful role of gauging and measuring that a child is on the right track academically.

Understanding the purpose of grades should contribute to student success

Whatever grade a child earns, that letter or number should inform the success of that individual in the next stage of their learning journey. Grades can help a family make decisions on the appropriate courses for their child whilst at school and help identify best-fit universities to consider as post-secondary options. Working in partnership with students and their parents, we use grades at HKA as one of the entry points into conversations about pathways to graduation and beyond.

Becoming a global citizen is essential to academic success

For young people today, being able to interact with and connect to issues and



individuals around the world is pivotal to their own current and future success. The issues and challenges that they will face are going to demand that they become adaptive and flexible, actively empathise with others and positively contribute to their local and global communities. Through the Global Citizen Diploma credential, HKA students have the opportunity to hone their intercultural competencies, community engagement and global understanding in concert with their rigorous academic studies.

Developing strong learning skills contribute to academic success

Learning skills such as research, organisation, collaboration and critical thinking are not skills that are graded, and yet a student's strength in these skill areas has a direct impact on earning good grades. In programmes like the IB Diploma, where concepts and skills are becoming increasingly important and content and information are becoming less important, the ability to apply learning skills appropriately and in context can be what a child needs to achieve at the highest levels. It is important for schools and families to support their children in nurturing these learning skills so that they can reach their full academic potential.

Grades reflect the performance, not the person

Grades reflect performance within a specific context and are one small part of who a child is as a learner, they cannot tell us who a child is as a person. As we think about our roles as educators or parents, we should be active participants in acknowledging what grades do tell us about how a child is performing in a subject area or on an examination, and

also reinforce that a child's ability to support and empathise with others, productivity as a team member or perseverance in an area of personal passion will probably never be captured by a grade.

Students should be able to speak to their stories as learners beyond grades

In addition to graduating with a transcript that publishes the collection of grades a student has earned over time, schools should provide their students with opportunities to tell their own stories as learners in a variety of ways. At HKA, students lead conferences with their teachers and parents, collect a range of work samples from their different subject areas and produce portfolios of their achievements to showcase who they are both in and out of the classroom. These activities complement their academic grades and provide holistic insights into who each individual is in the areas they most want to highlight.



Hong Kong Academy is a non-profit, through-train school offering a rigorous, student-centered education for children aged 3 to 18 years. The school was founded on the belief that all children bring a unique set of talents and strengths to their learning, with HKA providing a personalised approach that recognises this and encourages all students to reach their full potential.

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From our Early Childhood programme to the final years of Secondary School, HKA provides a rigorous, student-centred education that encourages all learners to fulfil their greatest potential.

Scholarships are available for secondary students to recognise the talents students demonstrate in the pursuit of their pathways to individual excellence. Please contact our Admissions team for more information.