

School Board Action Report

“Every student achieving, everyone accountable”



DATE: September 16, 2009

FROM: Dr. Maria Goodloe-Johnson, Superintendent

LEAD STAFF: Michael Tolley, High School Instructional Director

**STRATEGIC THEME/
FOCUS AREA:** Reform Initiatives – High School Reform

TITLE AND BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Revisions of School Board Policies C15.00 (High School Graduation Requirements) and D128.00 (Participation in Extracurricular Activities); Repeal of School Board Procedures C15.01, C15.02, and D128.0; and Adoption of D15.00 in place of the former D46.01 (High School Grade Marking and Graduation Procedures).

For Introduction: September 16, 2009
For Action: October 7, 2009

TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION/EVALUATION

- Grading Subcommittee of Steering Committee for High School Reform convened during the 2007-2008 school year.
- Grading Subcommittee submits its report to the Steering Committee in April 2008. Steering Committee approves recommendations, which are forwarded to the High School Instructional Director, Chief Academic Officer, and Superintendent.
- School Board briefed at the March 5, 2008 Student Learning Committee meeting.
- Proper use of the “E” and “N” grade implemented for the 2008-2009 school year.
- School Board briefed at the September 23, 2008 Student Learning Committee meeting.
- Stakeholder engagement conducted on five recommendations
- Engagement results forwarded to the Superintendent, Chief Academic Officer, Chief Operating/Financial Officer, and Instructional Directors in January 27, 2009.
- Cost estimates for implementing technology changes obtained in the spring of 2009.
- Recommendations and Policy Revisions brought to the School Board Curriculum and Policy Committee on February 23, 2009.
- Revisions and additional research requested by School Board Curriculum and Policy Committee presented at the March 23, 2009 Committee meeting.
- Additional work done regarding technical feasibility and funding sources
- Revisions and additional information presented to the School Board Curriculum and Policy Committee at the August 17, 2009 Committee meeting.
- School Board Curriculum and Policy Committee recommends that the matter be forwarded to the Executive Committee for addition to a future School Board Agenda
- Presented to the Executive Committee on September 10, 2009

- Introduction before the School Board on September 16, 2009
- Action by the School Board on October 7, 2009
- Policy Changes become effective upon School Board Approval.
- Development of Communications and Implementation Plans upon School Board Approval (Project Manager already identified).

RECOMMENDED MOTION

I move that the amendments of School Board Policies C15.00 (High School Graduation Requirements) and D128.00 (Participation in Extracurricular Activities) be approved, and that School Board Procedures C15.01, C15.02, and D128.01 be repealed. I also move that the Board adopt D15.00 (High School Grade and Credit Marking Policy) in place of the former D46.01 (High School Grade Marking and Graduation Procedures).

ISSUE

During the 2007-2008 school year, the Steering Committee for High School Reform convened a subcommittee to review grading practices within District. The dual charge of the committee was review current alignment and compliance with respect to Board Policy and state law related to grading practices, and to research and answer the following questions:

- o Should the District change to an 11-point grading system, containing plus and minus marks?
- o Should the District maintain the 2.0 core and cumulative grade point average required for graduation?
- o Should the District maintain the 2.0 grade point average required for athletic eligibility?
- o Should the District offer high school credit for high school courses taught at the middle school level?
- o Should the District offer weighted credit as an incentive for students who take Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Honors courses?

These questions involved a review of School Board Policies C15.00, D46.01, and D128.00; and School Board Procedures C15.01, C15.02, and D128.0. School Board Policy C15.00 was last revised in 2007. Its accompanying procedures relate to distinctions made for students in the Class of 2008 and beyond and students from prior classes, as 2008 was the first class of students required to pass the Washington Assessment of Student Learning or an approved alternative. School Board Policy D46.01 was last revised in 1989, with School Board Policy D128.00 has not been amended since its adoption in 1983.

The subcommittee was comprised of high school administrators, Student Information Systems, and Department of Technology Service (DoTS) representatives, Advanced Learning and Support, Prevention, and Intervention Managers, and high school teachers. High school counseling staff were involved with the work of the committee, as were athletic directors, legal counsel, Career and Technical Education and Special Education staff. Middle school and high school mathematics department heads provided input to the committee. The subcommittee ultimately made recommendations with respect to the five questions above, and matters of alignment and compliance with existing policy and law for the 2008-2009 school year (e.g., the

return to the use of the “E” grade to represent failure) were addressed by the High School Instructional Director through High School administrators, school counseling and registrar staff.

A large scale survey of stakeholders was undertaken, and close to 4,000 responses were received. Information on the survey results is attached. Survey results were discussed at the January 15, 2009, High School Head Counselors meeting. Counseling staff provided perceptive insights regarding survey results, as did DoTS staff and the members of the Steering Committee for High School Reform.

Taken in the aggregate, survey respondents strongly support weighted grading (62% favorable), high school credit for high school course work undertaken in middle school, under certain conditions (70% favorable), and establishing an 11-point grading scale, to include “+” and “-“ marks (54% favorable.) In the aggregate, respondents did not favor eliminating the 2.0 GPA graduation and athletic eligibility requirements, citing the need for maintain (and increasing) rigor in the high school curriculum. High school principals and middle school counselors (two specific interest groups who responded to the survey), however, do favor the proposed change. In a meeting held on January 15, 2009, high school head counselors also expressed favor for the elimination of the 2.0 GPA requirements.

The Steering Committee for High School Reform and its subcommittee on grading unanimously favored the elimination of the 2.0 GPA requirements, citing:

1. The level of rigor in high schools is strong and on the rise, through increased WASL expectations, current development of end-of-course exams and OSPI classroom-based assessments, expansion of the AP and IB courses and student participation PSAT testing for all, and many site-based and district-level reform initiatives.
2. The return to the use of “E” versus “N” marks for course failure for compliance purposes contributes to increased accountability in our high schools. It also increases the potential for students to not achieve the 2.0 graduation requirement.

Although most respondents would like to see weighted grading implemented beginning with the Class of 2013 rather than beginning for all students at a certain date, the DoTS, the Steering Committee for High School Reform, the subcommittee and students themselves prefer implementing this change as of a certain date, for all students.

The five recommendations were then presented to the School Board Curriculum and Policy Committee. Several additional changes needed to be made to School Board Policies C15.00 and D46.01 to bring them into compliance with current law and regulations regarding graduation requirements and participation in commencement, and such changes were included in the proposed Policy revisions.

At the request of the Curriculum and Instruction Policy Committee, the Policies were further revised to eliminate provisions that were procedural in nature. Additionally, the Committee requested the attached information regarding the practices of other school districts, and specific further information on certain portions of the five recommendations.

BEST PRACTICES

See attached Grading Subcommittee Report, Survey Results Memorandum, and Questions and Answers Document.

RESEARCH AND DATA SOURCES

See attached Grading Subcommittee Report, Survey Results Memorandum, and Questions and Answers Document.

POLICY IMPLICATION

Revisions of School Board Policies C15.00 and D128.00; Repeal of School Board Procedures C15.01, C15.02, and D128.01, and adoption of D15.00 in place of D46.01.

FISCAL IMPACT/REVENUE SOURCE

In order to facilitate the revisions and updates, changes will need to be done to the District's computer systems that record grades. The present cost estimate is \$140,000.

Expenditure: **One-time** **Annual**

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Level of Community Engagement: Consult. The purpose of the engagement was to obtain feedback from public and district stakeholders on the analysis, and alternatives under discussion

High School Principals were initially charged with discussing the proposed changes with their staff and community, including polling their respective PTA/PTSA groups regarding the proposals. The Steering Committee for High School Reform then gathered extensive additional stakeholder involvement on the five recommendations. All comprehensive high schools and several non-comprehensive high schools surveyed staff, students, and parents regarding the proposed changes. The survey was extended to community-at-large through a press release, and through posting the Grading survey on the district's website. Close to 4,000 survey responses were received. Sixteen high school principals, ten middle school counselors, 554 web survey participants, 1,528 students, 264 high school staff members, and 1,444 respondents where category was not disaggregated, participated in the survey.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

Approve amending of School Board Policies C15.00 (High School Graduation Requirements) and D128.00 (Participation in Extracurricular Activities); that School Board Procedures C15.01, C15.02, and D128.01 be repealed; and that the Board adopt D15.00 (High School Grade and Credit Marking Policy) in place of the former D46.01 (High School Grade Marking and Graduation Procedures). These changes bring Policy in line with current laws and regulations, and further the Board's goal of having procedural matters be addressed in administrative procedures and guidelines rather than School Board Policy.

ATTACHMENTS

[High School Graduation and Participation in Commencement Policy C15.00](#)

[High School Grade and Credit Marking Policy D15.00](#)

[Participation in Extracurricular Activities Policy D128.00 \(Revised 2009\)](#)

[Table for Grading Recommendations](#)

[Final Summary of Grading Survey Data](#)

[Comparative Data from Surrounding School Districts](#)

[Seattle School District Uniform Grading Scale](#)

[Electronically Gathered Grade Change Survey Results](#)

[Memorandum to the Chief Academic Officer Regarding Proposed Changes to the Grading](#)

[Policy and Graduation Requirements](#)

[High School Grading Practices Letter, Sent to all High School Families \(September 2008\)](#)

[High School Grading Practices Letter – Frequently Asked Questions \(September-October 2008\)](#)

[Seattle Public Schools Grading Practices – Original Committee Recommendations \(April 2008\)](#)