



## **SCHOOL BOARD ACTION REPORT**

**DATE:** June 5, 2020  
**FROM:** Denise Juneau, Superintendent  
**LEAD STAFF:** Dr. Diane DeBacker, Chief Academic Officer, (206) 252-0180, dmdebacker@seattleschools.org; Dr. Caleb Perkins, Executive Director of College and Career Readiness, (206) 252-0062, cbperkins@seattleschools.org

**For Introduction:** June 10, 2020

**For Action:** June 24, 2020

### **1. TITLE**

Extending the suspension of provisions in Board Policy No. 2420, High School Grade and Credit Marking, through August 2020

### **2. PURPOSE**

This Board Action Report extends the suspension of portions of Board Policy No. 2420, High School Grade and Credit Marking, through August 2020, changing the available grade options for courses earning high school credits to an “A” or “Incomplete.”

### **3. RECOMMENDED MOTION**

I move that the School Board extend through August 2020 the temporary suspension of identified provisions of Board Policy No. 2420, High School Grade and Credit Marking Policy, previously approved by the Board on April 20, 2020 as identified in Attachment A to the Board Action Report, and to be replaced with grade marking options “A” or “Incomplete” for courses that earn high school credits due to the containment of COVID-19.

### **4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

#### **a. Background**

The following is a summary of the background and rationale found in the Board Action Report for the temporary grading policy approved on April 20, 2020. Given that the background and rationale for this proposed action is very similar, the full background can be located in Attachment B.

While some circumstances have changed since April 20, there are still ongoing challenges posed by the COVID pandemic that make this temporary grading policy the best option for minimizing harm to students, particularly those furthest from educational justice. Further, as the response to COVID-19 has been continually evolving, OSPI issued additional grading guidelines on April 21 and April 29 that align with our opinion that the grading options of “A” or “Incomplete” should continue through the summer.

As noted in the April 20, 2020 Board Action Report, the school closure required by Governor Inslee through the end of the school year created a range of challenges for

Seattle Public Schools' educators, students, and their families. Determining how to address grading and earning credit has been a key concern. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) asked districts to determine locally how to provide meaningful opportunities for students to earn credits and provide meaningful feedback to students and their families. The district considered grading options for courses for high school credit that align with the vision for college and career readiness and employed the district's Racial Equity Analysis Tool, including case studies, to provide an intentional focus on students furthest from educational justice as part of the ongoing strategic plan commitment to *Seattle Excellence*.

The following guiding principles for these grading options were developed to further racial equity with regards to grading practices in this unprecedented time. With this Board action, the district wants to continue to:

- Minimize the negative impact of the school closure and the COVID pandemic on students, especially students furthest from educational justice. *This is the most important and overarching principle guiding our decisions;*
- Keep students engaged in learning;
- Keep teachers engaged in teaching;
- Meet the state's requirement to make a good faith effort in providing meaningful credit-earning opportunities;
- Provide space for flexibility and individualized plans to ensure equitable outcomes; and
- Promote common expectations across high schools.

The racial equity analysis of possible high school grading guidelines during the school closure, particularly their effects on SPS students furthest from educational justice (SFFEJ) indicated that the best grading policy option would be "A" or "Incomplete." The option has the following advantages for SFFEJ: their GPAs will not drop in comparison to their SPS classmates and there are incentives to stay engaged in learning. Moreover, SPS staff notes that while many universities and other programs across the country have stated that students will not be penalized for posting credit/no credit transcripts for this semester, this approach is not universal across all postsecondary institutions. Making "A" the only credit-based grade will help ensure students are not penalized during this time.

Students will continue to be expected to remain engaged in the standards-based activities and learning assigned by their teacher(s) to the extent possible to receive an "A". We will also have the option to give "Incompletes" to students who did not engage in learning and activities although they had the ability to do so. If students receive an "Incomplete," they will have through Fall Semester to complete work and earn an "A"

To support the implementation of this new policy, the district will continue to provide guidelines to ensure that all staff continue to make extraordinary efforts to keep students engaged in learning and earning the credits they need to take the next steps on their paths to college and career readiness.

At the same time, there are some important differences between the high school course offerings in the summer as compared with offerings during second semester which will mean that SPS staff will need to develop summer-specific grading guidelines to

accompany this policy. The main high school credit-bearing options in the Summer 2020 are Skills Center courses, credit-bearing internships, World Languages opportunities, and Apex credit recovery. Some high schools are also offering their own credit-bearing options, primarily in the area of credit retrieval. Given these options, here are some of the ways in which the summer term differs from second semester:

- There are far fewer teachers involved with summer school as compared with the thousands teaching during second semester. SPS staff for summer programming will be able to engage regularly with teachers to ensure that they have the supports they need so that students are treated equitably.
- SPS staff for summer programming can take more steps to ensure that the students enrolled in the summer learning courses have adequate access to technology than SPS staff were able to take for second semester, particularly right after the school closure in March.
- Many of the summer course offerings were designed to be online as opposed to the courses offered during second semester.
- One of the main high school credit-earning options in the summer is the Apex program. It is an online program that operates within specific parameters in determining passing or not passing and is primarily for credit retrieval.

Given these differences, SPS will refine grading guidelines that accompany this policy to match the parameters and characteristics of summer courses. For example, as has existed in past summers, there will be a process by which students can withdraw from summer courses if necessary, particularly if external circumstances require them to withdraw. The extension of the temporary suspension of the section of Policy No. 2420 still allows students to withdraw from a course. In addition, since the temporary grading policy was approved on April 20, 2020, OSPI has provided additional guidance and grading guidelines will conform to the most current guidance received.

In summary, apart from the smaller differences between second semester and the summer, the continuation of this temporary grading policy is needed for a few larger reasons. First, OSPI has recognized the need and communicated new guidance in support of the continuation. Second, our racial equity analysis continues to indicate that this is the best option for students furthest from educational justice. Last, staff indicated in the April 20, 2020 Board Special Meeting that the suspension of the provisions in Board Policy would end after second semester. However, as the situation with COVID-19 has evolved, a longer suspension is appropriate to respond to the needs of students in this unprecedented time.

**b. Alternatives**

Do not approve the extension of these policy changes. This is not recommended as it would mean schools and educators would have to rely on existing grading approaches during this extraordinary time. That would result in greater inequities in student outcomes, particularly for students furthest from educational justice.

Another alternative is to consider changing our grading policy to be “Credit or No Credit” or allow students to earn a semester grade based on the grade they had when schools closed. Neither of these options is recommended. Based on the district’s equity

analysis, it is believed both options will be more likely to result in inequitable outcomes for SPS students. “Credit or No Credit” is also not allowed by OSPI rules issued in April.

**c. Research**

For the Board Action Report approved on April 20<sup>th</sup>, the district reviewed and consulted with hundreds of sources across the state and country in determining the recommended approach to a high school grading policy during the school closure this semester. This included external conversations and consultation with colleagues and experts from the Council of Great City Schools, the Association of Washington School Principals, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and districts throughout the Puget Sound and region. The district also consulted internally with experts and colleagues, including the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction (CAI) team, the Department of Racial Equity Advancement (DREA), and Office of African American Male Achievement (AAMA). The district also consulted with the leadership of Principals’ Association of Seattle Schools (PASS) and the Seattle Education Association (SEA) in developing specific grading guidelines to accompany this policy. Moreover, district leadership arrived at this new grading proposal after conducting a racial equity analysis of different grading policy options to see how they would affect students furthest from educational justice in general, as well as particular students in our system. Specifically, they looked at how a number of options would connect with our most important guiding principle of minimizing the negative impact of the school closure and specifically, how they would impact the desired outcomes for SPS students furthest from educational justice. For a full description of the research conducted for the April 20<sup>th</sup> BAR, please review Attachment B.

Since April 20<sup>th</sup>, SPS staff has been in regular contact with many of these groups, particularly school-based leaders, and has heard a great deal of feedback on the second semester grading policy. For this Board Action Report requesting a continuation of this policy through the summer, SPS staff also talked with some of the same stakeholders but were unable to do a comprehensive consultation given the shorter timeline.

**5. FISCAL IMPACT/REVENUE SOURCE**

There could potentially be a need for additional staff time to address “Incompletes” during the first semester of the 2020-21 school year but the exact amount of this impact is undetermined.

Expenditure: ☐ One-time ☐ Annual ☐ Multi-Year ☒ N/A

Revenue: ☐ One-time ☐ Annual ☐ Multi-Year ☒ N/A

**6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

With guidance from the District’s Community Engagement tool, this action was determined to merit the following tier of community engagement:

☐ Not applicable

☒ Tier 1: Inform

☐ Tier 2: Consult/Involve

☐ Tier 3: Collaborate

For the April 20<sup>th</sup> Board Action Report, Staff engaged in broad conversations on high school grading during school closure with a number of stakeholders prior to bringing this Board Action Report forward, including School Board Directors, Principals' Association of Seattle Schools (PASS) leadership, Seattle Education Association (SEA) leadership, Seattle Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) leadership, Associated Student Body (ASB) leadership, the Superintendent's Advisory Group, the African American Male Achievement Student Leadership Council, high school principals, department chairs, and other teacher leaders. SPS staff also reached out to School Board Directors, PASS leadership, SEA leadership, and PTSA leadership about the specific proposal in the April 20<sup>th</sup> Board Action Report. Please see community engagement section in Attachment B dated for more details.

As noted in the research section above, there has been limited additional engagement as SPS staff considered the plan for the summer and developed this Board Action Report due to a short timeline and the number of key decisions requiring stakeholders' attention.

However, SPS staff has had regular conversations with school-based staff from across the district on the high school grading policy since April 20 and that continues to guide the decision-making and planning with respect to grading. After approval of the extension of this policy, SPS central staff will continue to communicate with summer school program leads involved with high school credit-bearing learning opportunities in the summer.

SPS staff will also continue to develop an outreach and partnership plan with community-based organizations (e.g., Africatown; Manhood Development Program; WA-BLOC; Urban Family Center; Rainier Vista Boys & Girls Club; College Success Foundation) in addition to other community-based organizations that are accountable to African American students and families to provide additional outreach. It is anticipated that grading and grading policy will be an ongoing topic in the conversations with these organizations.

## **7. EQUITY ANALYSIS**

As noted in the Board Action Report presented on April 20, 2020, racial equity analyses of the grading policy options have been central to the development of this proposed policy. To reiterate, the analyses of effects on specific SPS students furthest from educational justice revealed that "A" or "Incomplete" would be the best option. SPS staff developed this recommendation after conducting a racial equity analysis of the options to see how they would affect students furthest from educational justice in general as well as particular students in our system. Specifically, SPS staff looked at how each option connects with our most important guiding principle of minimizing the negative impact and looked at the following desired outcomes for SPS SFJEJ:

- Earn credit in every class they are enrolled in this semester;
- Stay engaged in learning and learn what they need to learn in order to find success in their future coursework and/or employment;
- Do not end up with lower GPAs relative to their SPS classmates given comparative lack of access to teaching and learning resources; and

- Are admitted to the colleges of their choice and earn any scholarships that they are good candidates for, given their academic records.

For more information on the Racial Equity Analysis conducted for the BAR presented on April 20, 2020, please review Attachment B. For the summer, SPS staff reviewed this analysis again and that review contributed to the conclusion that the policy should be extended through the summer.

## **8. STUDENT BENEFIT**

As noted above, SPS leadership is proposing “A” or “Incomplete” as the grading options for Summer 2020 as the best option for the district’s students furthest from educational justice, given the overarching goal of minimizing the negative impact of the school closure and the COVID pandemic on students.

## **9. WHY BOARD ACTION IS NECESSARY**

- ☐ Amount of contract initial value or contract amendment exceeds \$250,000 (Policy No. 6220)
- ☐ Amount of grant exceeds \$250,000 in a single fiscal year (Policy No. 6114)
- ☒ Adopting, amending, or repealing a Board policy
- ☐ Formally accepting the completion of a public works project and closing out the contract
- ☐ Legal requirement for the School Board to take action on this matter
- ☐ Board Policy No. \_\_\_\_\_, [TITLE], provides the Board shall approve this item
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## **10. POLICY IMPLICATION**

This motion would result in the continuation of the temporary suspension of identified provisions in Board Policy No. 2420, High School Grade and Credit Marking Policy, as described above and in Attachment A of this Board Action Report, through August 2020.

This motion is in alignment with the principles found in Policy No. 0030, Ensuring Educational and Racial Equity.

## **11. BOARD COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION**

This motion was not reviewed in a committee. SPS staff did not have clarity from OSPI that the state’s April grading guidelines would extend through August 2020 and did not have sufficient details on the plan for high school credit-bearing summer learning opportunities to develop this Board Action Report in time for the May Curriculum & Instruction Committee meeting. Since the policy needs to be in effect before the start of the summer term in July, this Board Action


Report is going straight to the full Board after consultation with and approval by the Superintendent and School Board President.

**12. TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

Upon approval of this motion the identified provisions of Policy No. 2420, High School Grade and Credit Marking Policy, will continue to be suspended through August 2020 and secondary school leaders, counselors, and educators will be informed of the change to grade marks “A” or “Incomplete”.

**13. ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Attachment A: Policy No. 2420, High School Grade and Credit Marking Policy – provisions to be temporarily suspended are crossed out (for reference)
- B. Attachment B: Copy of Approved Board Action Report from April 20, 2020 suspending provisions of Policy No. 2420, High School Grade and Credit Marking Policy (for reference)

	<p>HIGH SCHOOL GRADE &amp; CREDIT MARKING POLICY</p>	<p>Policy No. 2420  March 11, 2020  Page 1 of 4</p>
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It is the policy of the Seattle School Board that its high school students receive grades and credits in a manner that is understandable, accurate, and consistent across the District.

1. Grades

~~The District shall employ a uniform eleven-point weighted grading system at the high school level, awarding the following marks:~~

~~A — A — B+ — B — B — C+ — C — C — D+ — D — E~~

~~A “D” mark is the lowest passing grade; an “E” mark indicates failure. The Superintendent or the Superintendent’s designee shall establish and post a Seattle School District Uniform Grading Scale, which details the corresponding percentage grade range for each of the eleven grade marks. The Seattle Public Schools transcripts show official grade point averages (GPAs), as mandated by state law.~~

Honors courses receiving an additional .5 Quality Point and courses eligible to receive college credit from an accredited institution, such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, College in the High School and Running Start courses receiving an additional 1.0 Quality Point. Quality Points are used to calculate District weighted GPA, but per state law, may not be used to calculate official GPA. The marks of “P”, “N”, “W”, and “I” may be used only under specific circumstances in the manner set forth in the *K-12 School Counseling Manual*.

Students may retake courses in-district to attempt to earn a higher grade. If a student retakes a course to attempt to earn a higher grade, only the highest grade received will be counted towards the student's grade point average. However, a record of all classes taken, including the grades received, will remain on the student's transcript and the student will receive credit towards graduation for only one of the courses.

2. Credits

- A. Students will be awarded high school academic credit for successful completion of a specified unit of study. Successful completion of a specified unit of study means the following:



- a. Earning a passing grade in a district-approved course, according to the district's relevant grading policies or Counseling Services Manual provision; and/or
  - b. Demonstrating competency and proficiency; and/or
  - c. Successfully completing an established number of hours of any planned alternative instructional activities as determined by the district; and/or
  - d. Successfully meeting the credit-earning requirements specified in Superintendent Procedure 2024SP, Policy 2409, and/or Policy 2413.
- B. High school courses taken during middle school will be treated as follows:

- a. Beginning with courses taken during the 2019-20 school year, unless a student and the student's family request otherwise, any high school course completed in a District middle school shall be counted as high school credit, added to the high school transcript (including the grade earned), and applied to fulfilling high school graduation requirements. Courses taken prior to the 2019-20 school year may be added to high school transcripts upon request.

The course in the middle school must meet or exceed the requirements for the same high school course and be on the Seattle Public Schools approved course list. For a middle school course to be counted as equivalent to a high school course, it must be taught by a teacher qualified to teach the course at the high school level.

Middle schools that wish to offer alternative learning experiences, such as an online or computer based program at the high school level, overseen by school staff, must contact the Department of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction for approval.

- b. Beginning with courses taken during the 2019-20 school year, unless a student and the student's family request otherwise, any high school level course completed at a District high school by a middle school student shall be counted as high school credit, added to the high school transcript (including the grade earned), and applied to fulfilling high school graduation requirements. The academic level of the course must exceed the requirements for middle school, and the course must be on the Seattle Public Schools approved course list. Courses taken prior to the 2019-20 school year may be added to high school transcripts upon request.
- c. Courses taken outside of Seattle Public Schools during the middle school grades are subject to the following conditions:

- Courses already on a student's transcript when the student transfers to Seattle Public Schools, or for which the family provides a transcript and verification of existing policy allowing this credit from the student's previous district, may be added to the Seattle Public Schools transcript for high school credit. Families must follow the process referenced in the Counseling Services Manual.
- Courses taken outside of Seattle Public Schools by actively enrolled students are subject to Superintendent Procedure 2024SP.

### C. Credit Recovery

- Students who meet the graduation standard in a state graduation pathway, excluding the Career and Technical Education pathway and Armed Services Vocational Aptitude pathway, may recover credit for previously failed courses as described below:
  - Math: Students may recover one-half (.5) credit for a previously failed Algebra 1 (or equivalent) or Geometry (or equivalent) course. Students with Individual Education Plans may recover credit for alternative courses.
  - Language Arts: Students may recover one-half (.5) Language Arts credit for a previously failed 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade required Language Arts course.
- Science: Starting with the class of 2020, students may recover one-half (.5) science credit for a previously failed 9th or 10th grade science course by meeting proficiency on the state summative assessment or a state approved alternative.
- In all of the situations outlined above, unique course codes will be created and will substitute for a course that was previously failed. Failed courses remain on transcript.

### 3. Grade and Credit Changes

A grade and/or credit change can only be made by the teacher of record for the specific course at issue or by the Principal of the school where the course was taken and the change is being requested due to either a math error or bias. If the student has left the school where the course at issue was taken, any grade and/or credit change by either the teacher of record or the Principal must be reviewed and approved with signature by a director of schools P-12.

### 4. Promotion and Retention

High school grade level standing is determined by a combination of credit attainment and/or chronology and, in the case of Home Based Instruction

students, age. After each semester, standing will be updated according to the following table:

**Grade Level Promotion Criteria**

Grade 9        Successful Promotion from 8<sup>th</sup>, 0.00-5.99 credits  
Grade 10    6.0-11.99 credits or completion of one year of high school  
Grade 11    12-17.99 credits or completion of two years of high school  
Grade 12    18\* credits or completion of three years of high school.

\*15 credit promotion applies for students in the classes of 2016-2020. For students in the class of 2021 and beyond, senior promotion will occur when 18 credits have been earned.

Being placed at a given grade level does not eliminate the need to complete all local and state graduation requirements if a student is attempting to earn a diploma through Seattle Public Schools.

5.        **High School Enrollment for Home Based Instruction Students**

Students for whom a “Declaration of Intent to Home School” form is on file with Seattle Public School shall be enrolled in high school according to the following schedule:

- Freshman/9<sup>th</sup> grade if age 14 by August 31 of the year wishing to enroll
- Sophomore/10<sup>th</sup> grade if age 15 by August 31 of the year wishing to enroll
- Junior/11<sup>th</sup> grade if age 16 by August 31 of the year wishing to enroll
- Senior/12<sup>th</sup> grade if age 17 by August 31 of the year wishing to enroll

Students will be assigned the appropriate grade level during the enrollment process. Being placed at a given grade level does not eliminate the need to complete all graduation requirements if the student is attempting to earn a diploma through Seattle Public Schools.

6.        **Running Start**

A student must have attained at least Junior/11<sup>th</sup> grade status in order to enroll in Running Start, per the Running Start regulations. For the purposes of Running Start enrollment only, a student may be considered a Junior/11<sup>th</sup> grade either by reaching age 16 and placing into 100-level or credit-earning college classes through the college placement exam. The college placement exam is given at the community colleges and students are responsible for paying the exam fee.

The Superintendent or the Superintendent’s designee(s) shall maintain the Counseling Services Manual as the administrative procedures that further implement this Policy.

Adopted: December 2011

Revised: March 2020; July 2019; May 2019; November 2017; July 2014, November 2012; June 2012; February 2012

Cross Reference: Policy No. 2410; Policy No. 3114; Superintendent Procedure 2024SP; Policy No. 2140

Previous Policies: D15.00

Legal References: RCW 28A.150.240(g) Basic Education Act of 1977; WAC 180-51-068

State subject and credit requirements for high school graduation—Students entering the ninth grade on or after July 1, 2015

Management Resources:



# School Board Action Report (BAR)

## Approved BAR – Suspending provisions of Board Policy No. 2420, High School Grade and Credit Marking

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While Seattle Public Schools endeavors to only post documents optimized for accessibility, due to the nature and complexity of some documents, an accessible version of the document may not be available. In these limited circumstances, the District will provide equally effective alternate access.

For questions and more information about this document, please contact the following:

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Executive Director of College and Career Readiness  
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School Board Action Report "Suspending provisions of Board Policy 2420, High School Grade and Credit Marking" approved by the School Board on April 20, 2020.

## SCHOOL BOARD ACTION REPORT

**DATE:** April 16, 2020  
**FROM:** Denise Juneau, Superintendent  
**LEAD STAFF:** Dr. Diane DeBacker, Chief Academic Officer, (206) 252-0180, dmdebacker@seattleschools.org; Dr. Caleb Perkins, Executive Director of College and Career Readiness, (206) 252-0062, cbperkins@seattleschools.org  
**For Introduction:** April 20, 2020  
**For Action:** April 20, 2020

### 1. TITLE

Suspending provisions of Board Policy No. 2420, High School Grade and Credit Marking

### 2. PURPOSE

This Board Action Report suspends portions of Board Policy No. 2420, High School Grade and Credit Marking, during the COVID-19 school closure to change available grade options for courses that earn high school credits to an “A” or “Incomplete”.

### 3. RECOMMENDED MOTION

I move that the School Board temporarily suspend identified provisions of Board Policy No. 2420, High School Grade and Credit Marking Policy, as identified in Attachment A to the Board Action Report, to be replaced with grade marking options “A” or “Incomplete” for courses that earn high school credits, for the duration of school closure due to the containment of COVID-19. Immediate action is in the best interest of the district.

### 4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

#### a. **Background**

The school closure required by Governor Inslee through the end of the year creates a range of challenges for Seattle Public Schools’ educators, students, and their families. Determining how to address grading and earning credit is a key concern. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) asked districts to determine locally how to provide meaningful opportunities for students to earn credits and provide meaningful feedback to students and their families. The district considered grading options for courses for high school credit that align with the vision for college and career readiness and employed the district’s Racial Equity Analysis Tool, including case studies, to provide an intentional focus on students furthest from educational justice as part of the ongoing strategic plan commitment to *Seattle Excellence*.

The following guiding principles for these grading options were developed to further racial equity with regards to grading practices in this unprecedented time. The district wants to:

- Ensure that the school closure does not have a negative impact on students, especially students furthest from educational justice. *This is the most important and overarching principle guiding our decisions.*
- Keep students engaged in learning.
- Keep teachers engaged in teaching.
- Meet the state’s requirement to make a good faith effort in providing meaningful credit-earning opportunities.
- Provide space for flexibility and individualized plans to ensure equitable outcomes.
- Promote common expectations across high schools to guide their work.

The racial equity analysis of possible high school grading guidelines during the school closure, particularly their effects on SPS students furthest from educational justice (SFFEJ), revealed two stronger options:

- Credit or Incomplete
- A or Incomplete

Both options have anticipated advantages for SFFEJ: their GPAs will not drop in comparison to their SPS classmates, there are incentives to stay engaged in learning, and most institutions of higher education have indicated that they will not penalize students for either option. Both options also strike a balance between ensuring that students can make progress towards content standards and acknowledging challenges to learning at this time.

That said, *SPS leadership is proposing “A” or “Incomplete” as the only grading options for the Spring 2020 semester.* We believe this will be the best option for our students furthest from educational justice given our overarching goal of mitigating harm to students caused by the school closure.

Specifically, we note that:

- Many universities and other programs across the country have stated that students will not be penalized for posting credit/no credit transcripts for this semester, but this approach is not universal across all postsecondary institutions. Making “A” the only credit-based grade will ensure students are not penalized.
- Other school districts are already taking different approaches. Some are deciding to give letter grades, which could put our students at a relative disadvantage.

Students will be asked to remain engaged in the standards-based activities and learning assigned by their teacher(s) to the extent possible to receive an “A”. We will also have the option to give “Incompletes” to students who did not engage in learning and activities although they had the ability to do so. These students will have through Fall Semester to complete work and earn an “A”.

To support the implementation of this new policy, the district will develop other guidelines to ensure that all staff continue to make extraordinary efforts to keep students engaged in learning and earning the credits they need to take the next steps on their paths to college and career readiness.

#### **b. Alternatives**

Do not approve these policy changes. This is not recommended as it would mean schools and educators would have to rely on existing grading approaches during this

extraordinary time. That would result in greater inequities in student outcomes, particularly for students furthest from educational justice.

Another alternative is to consider changing our grading policy to be “Credit or No Credit” or allow students to earn a semester grade based on the grade they had when schools closed. Neither of these options is recommended. Based on the district’s equity analysis, it is believed both options will be more likely to result in inequitable outcomes for SPS students.

**c. Research**

The district reviewed and consulted with hundreds of sources across the state and country in determining the recommended approach to a high school grading policy during the school closure this semester. This included external conversations and consultation with colleagues and experts from the Council of Great City Schools, the Association of Washington School Principals, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and districts throughout the Puget Sound and region. The district also consulted internally with experts and colleagues, including the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction (CAI) team, the Department of Racial Equity Advancement (DREA), and Office of African American Male Achievement (AAMA).

In addition, district leadership arrived at this new grading proposal after conducting a racial equity analysis of different grading policy options to see how they would affect students furthest from educational justice in general, as well as particular students in our system. Specifically, they looked at how the following options would connect with our most important guiding principle of ensuring no negative impact and specifically, how they would impact the desired outcomes for SPS students furthest from educational justice: 1. A or Incomplete; 2. Credit or Incomplete; 3. Letter Grades per current policy; 4. Giving students the grades they had as of March 12 when schools closed. This analysis revealed that the “A or Incomplete” approach was the best option.

Staff also conducted two formal analyses to gauge the effect on different grading policy options on students furthest from educational justice:

- Analysis of Schoology Data: The Department of Technology Services (DoTS) and Research and Evaluation have been collecting data on Schoology log-ins by students post school closures. In the absence of data on how many students currently have access to computers and internet, Schoology log-ins can be seen as proxy data. Students may be able to access Schoology through their phones, but are likely not able to fully participate in remote learning using only their phones. Early analysis indicates that a large number of African American male students are not connecting with their teachers via Schoology. The overall percentage of students who have logged into Schoology since the school closure is 71.5% while the percentage for the African American males is 60%.
- Analysis of Gradebook data: DoTS and Research and Evaluation are working to analyze gradebook records from Quarter 3 of this semester to Quarter 3 of spring 2019. If they see a steeper decline in grades for SFFEJ/African American males than other students, that would suggest that SFFEJ/African American males are being disproportionately impacted by the closure of school due to COVID-19. Their initial findings suggest that school closure has disproportionately impacted the GPAs of



Students of Color relative to other students across the district. However, the current impact is small. They did not see evidence of disproportionate impacts for African American male students. They will need to do additional analysis to confirm these initial conclusions.

These analyses further solidified our conclusion that continuing the current letter grade policy or giving students grades for where they were on March 12 would result in more inequitable outcomes for students furthest from educational justice.

## **5. FISCAL IMPACT/REVENUE SOURCE**

There is no fiscal impact to this action.

Expenditure: ☐ One-time ☐ Annual ☐ Multi-Year ☒ N/A

Revenue: ☐ One-time ☐ Annual ☐ Multi-Year ☒ N/A

## **6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

With guidance from the District's Community Engagement tool, this action was determined to merit the following tier of community engagement:

☐ Not applicable

☒ Tier 1: Inform

☒ Tier 2: Consult/Involve

☐ Tier 3: Collaborate

Staff have engaged in broad conversations on high school grading during school closure with a number of stakeholders prior to bringing this Board Action Report forward including School Board Directors, Principals' Association of Seattle Schools (PASS) leadership, Seattle Education Association (SEA) leadership, Seattle Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) leadership, Associated Student Body (ASB) leadership, the Superintendent's Advisory Group, the African American Male Achievement Student Leadership Council, high school principals, department chairs, and other teacher leaders. We have also reached out to School Board Directors, PASS leadership, SEA leadership, and PTSA leadership about the specific proposal in this Board Action Report.

After approval of the change, the new policy will be posted, and the changes will be communicated to middle and high school staff. We are including middle school staff since there are high school credit-bearing courses offered at the middle school level and this potential temporary suspension of policy will be applied to them as well.

We will also develop a plan of action with community-based organizations (e.g., Africatown; Manhood Development Program; WA-BLOC; Urban Family Center; Rainier Vista Boys & Girls Club; College Success Foundation) in addition to other Community-Based Organizations that are accountable to African American students and families to provide additional outreach.

## 7. **EQUITY ANALYSIS**

As noted above, racial equity analyses of the grading policy options have been central to the development of this proposed policy. To reiterate, the analyses of effects on specific SPS students furthest from educational justice revealed two stronger options:

- Credit or Incomplete
- A or Incomplete

SPS leadership is recommending that “A” or “Incomplete” be the only grading options for the Spring 2020 semester because this will be the best option for our students furthest from educational justice.

Also noted above, we developed this recommendation after conducting a racial equity analysis of the options to see how they would affect students furthest from educational justice in general as well as particular students in our system. Specifically, we looked at how each option connects with our most important guiding principle of ensuring no negative impact and looked at the following desired outcomes for SPS SFEEJ:

- Earn credit in every class they are enrolled in this semester.
- Stay engaged in learning and learn what they need to learn in order to find success in their future coursework and/or employment.
- Do not end up with lower GPAs relative to their SPS classmates given comparative lack of access to teaching and learning resources.
- Are admitted to the colleges of their choice and earn any scholarships that they are good candidates for, given their academic records.

Moreover, the district also conducted two formal analyses to gauge the effect on different grading policy options on students furthest from educational justice: Analysis of Schoology Data and an Analysis of Gradebook data (see explanation above).

These analyses further solidified our conclusion that continuing the current letter grade policy or giving students grades for where they were on March 10 would result in more inequitable outcomes for students furthest from educational justice.

## 8. **STUDENT BENEFIT**

As noted above, SPS leadership is proposing “A” or “Incomplete” as the only grading options for the Spring 2020 semester as the best option for the district’s students furthest from educational justice, given the overarching goal to ensure that the school closure does not result in any harm to these students.

## 9. **WHY BOARD ACTION IS NECESSARY**

- ☐ Amount of contract initial value or contract amendment exceeds \$250,000 (Policy No. 6220)
- ☐ Amount of grant exceeds \$250,000 in a single fiscal year (Policy No. 6114)
- ☒ Adopting, amending, or repealing a Board policy

☐ Formally accepting the completion of a public works project and closing out the contract

☐ Legal requirement for the School Board to take action on this matter

☐ Board Policy No. \_\_\_\_\_, [TITLE], provides the Board shall approve this item

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. POLICY IMPLICATION**

This motion would result in the temporary suspension of identified provisions in Board Policy No. 2420, High School Grade and Credit Marking Policy, as described above and in Attachment A of this Board Action Report.

This motion is in alignment with the principles found in Policy No. 0030, Ensuring Educational and Racial Equity.

**11. BOARD COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION**

This motion was not reviewed in a committee.

**12. TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

Upon approval of this motion the identified provisions of Policy No. 2420, High School Grade and Credit Marking Policy, will be suspended for the duration of the COVID-19 school closure and secondary school leaders, counselors, and educators will be informed of the change to grade marks “A” or “Incomplete”. In addition, PowerSchool will be modified to give teachers only “A” or “Incomplete” as options when recording grades for high school students.

**13. ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment A: Policy No. 2420, High School Grade and Credit Marking Policy – provisions to be temporarily suspended are crossed out (for reference)