



# PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION Eric C. Davis, Chairman

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION Mark Johnson, Superintendent of Public Instruction

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DATE: April 23, 2020  
TO: State Board of Education  
FROM: Dr. David Stegall, Sneha Shah-Coltrane, and NCDPI Grading Workgroup  
RE: Recommendation for Statewide Grading for K-11 Due to COVID-19

## STATEWIDE GRADING POLICY FOR K-11 DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND EXTENDED SCHOOL BUILDING CLOSURES

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NC K-12 public schools have been closed for an extended time for in-person instruction. All NC local education agencies (LEAs) and charter schools continue to engage students through remote learning opportunities to support continued student growth and well-being during this public health crisis.

In NC K-12 public schools, remote learning is defined as learning that takes place outside of the traditional school setting using various media and formats, such as but not limited to: video conference, telephone conference, print material, online material, or learning management systems. It is paramount to remember the unprecedented condition students are learning in and to focus on engagement more than evaluation.

In an initial scan of grading guidance provided by other state education agencies, NCDPI staff have found that many states are leaving grading decisions up to local public school units with some general recommendations. Some of which include the use of a pass/no credit approach across some/all grades and ensuring a "no harm" approach as it pertains to grades. There is frequent mention of the importance of providing students feedback with a focus on academic growth. NC stakeholders, especially educators and higher education partners, have indicated that there is a great desire for consistency in issues of grading across our state at this time.

### NCDPI Grading Workgroup Guiding Principles:

- To develop a statewide grading policy that positively impacts as many students as possible, *with grace and generosity*;
- To understand that no grading policy will solve issues of inequities that typically exist in communities and schools, especially when the school building environment and teacher access are not in place as equalizing and supportive factors;
- To validate the efforts of students, families, teachers, and support staff during remote learning;

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- To mitigate potential negative impact of COVID-19 remote learning as much as possible on student grading;
- To address stakeholder concerns, including those from students and parents; and
- To remember that all voices may not be at the table.

**NCDPI Recommendation is responsive to:**

- Providing feedback and engagement to support continued student growth and well-being and not just evaluation;
- Equity and excellence issues regarding access to learning environment as well as student growth and achievement; and
- Extending grace and generosity through flexibility and varied learning opportunities.

***In this time of uncertainty, the NCDPI Grading Workgroup requests the State Board of Education to approve statewide guidance for grading of NC's public school students in Grades K-11 as described below:***

**NCDPI GRADING WORKGROUP RECOMMENDATION**

**RECOMMENDATION FOR GRADES K-5:**

- Students will receive no final grade in grades K-5.
- Instead of a final grade, teachers will provide year-end feedback for students regarding learning from the full academic school year, using a format determined locally.
- Teachers will document individual student strengths and needs from both an academic and social/emotional perspective to ensure an effective transition from the spring 2020 remote learning process to the 2020-21 academic year.

**RECOMMENDATION FOR GRADES 6-8:**

- Students will receive a Pass "PC19" or Withdrawal "WC19" for the final course grades for all middle school courses.
  - A student's grade will be held harmless for learning after March 13.
  - PC19 will be assigned to any student who was meeting expectations and passing the course as of March 13 or who worked to improve to the point of passing after March 13 through remote learning.
  - WC19 will be assigned to any student who was not passing the course as of March 13 and who was unable to improve to the point of passing the course through remote learning opportunities. A middle school course grade of WC19 does not equate to a failing course grade nor does it indicate that a grade retention should occur or that the course must be repeated. The grade WC19 simply indicates a lack of evidence of mastery of standards addressed in the particular content area.

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- Teachers will document individual student strengths and needs from both an academic and social/emotional perspective to ensure an effective transition from the spring 2020 remote learning process to the 2020-21 academic year.
- High school courses taken in middle school will follow the grading options presented below for high school students, with the understanding that if there is a numeric grade on the transcript it will not be calculated in the high school GPA per SBE policy, Course for Credit, CCRE-001.
- Due to COVID-19, NCDPI developed a new grade scale in PowerSchool to move from Pass/Fail to Pass/Withdraw. “PC19” and “WC19” have been added into PowerSchool.

### **RECOMMENDATION FOR GRADES 9-11:**

Students in grades 9-11 and non-graduating seniors will be awarded final grades based on the following grading system for the 2019-20 school year.

### **Current Spring 2020 Courses:**

- Students will be given a choice for how each final course grade will appear on the transcript for both year-long and semester courses currently in progress.
  - Students will have two options for each final course grade:
    - Numeric grade, the highest grade representing learning as of March 13 or as improved through the semester as remote learning continued
    - or**
    - PC19 or WC19.
  - Students will determine how each final course grade will appear on the transcript at the end of the semester after advising from the teacher/school and in consultation with the parent/guardian.
  - When students choose to report a numeric grade as the final grade on the transcript, the numeric grade will be calculated into the cumulative GPA, following the guidelines in SBE policy GRAD-009.
  - When students choose to report a PC19 or WC19 as the final grade on the transcript, there is no GPA impact when using these grades.
  - When students in a yearlong course choose a PC19 or WC19 for the spring portion of the course, the fall term grade will be counted into the GPA. Clear directions for PowerSchool will come at a later date.
- **Additional Notes:**
  - Students will not receive a failing grade. LEAs/Charters will advise the use of WC19 for any student who is failing as of March 13 and was unable to improve through remote learning opportunities.
    - A final grade of PC19 does award a full unit of credit for a high school course while a grade of WC19 does not award a unit of credit.

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- WC19 does not equate to a failing course grade but indicates a lack of evidence of mastery of standards addressed in the particular course and that the school is unable to award a unit of credit.
- NCDPI encourages LEAs/Charters to use all means possible to support student learning that has been impacted by COVID-19 in the future, such as Credit Recovery and Repeating a Course for Credit (SBE-CCRE-001).
- Issuing a temporary grade of Incomplete may be used locally in instances when the student, parent/guardian, teacher, and school administration determine it is appropriate and develop a clear, time-bound plan to complete all course requirements.
- Students will maintain the grades for fall courses as already stored, year-long and semester. Fall 2019 final grades will be calculated into a student's GPA.

#### **STUDENT PROMOTION AND RETENTION:**

- Student promotion and retention will remain the decision of the school principal and staff.
- NCDPI recommends that districts/schools only consider retention of students if the retention consideration process was already well underway for a student prior to March 13, 2020.
- If a student was being considered for retention prior to March 13 and is still being considered for retention, NCDPI strongly encourages the development of a local plan to ensure effective communication and collaboration between the school and family to determine the most effective path forward for the student, especially given these extraordinary circumstances that students/families find themselves in as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and extended school closure.

#### **NCDPI RECOMMENDATION FOR SBE POLICY AMENDMENTS:**

##### **SBE Policy GRAD-009:**

##### **High school transcript standards**

*NCDPI recommends temporary amendment of this policy through June 30, 2020.*

- Sections of this board policy addressing grading scale and GPA calculations require temporary amendment to accommodate the SBE's decisions on both the Graduating Senior (SBE approved March 27, 2020) and K-11 grading systems to be used statewide to complete the 2019-2020 school year during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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## **STAKEHOLDER INPUT FOR GRADING WORKGROUP:**

Input on the NCDPI Grading Workgroup recommendation came from across the state:

- SBE Student Advisors and Superintendent Advisors
- District Superintendents and Charter School Leaders
- NCASA and NCSSA recommendations
- UNC System Admission Directors/Enrollment Managers
- NC Independent Colleges and Universities Admission Directors
- CAO Advisory Group, representing all regions and charter schools
- SBE Teacher/Principal Advisors
- Internal NCDPI staff representing all academic areas, regional support teams, and charter schools.
- Students/Families, through contacts initiated by members of the public

*Feedback varied from educators and administrators. However, students of diverse backgrounds did clearly state that student options for high school grades were necessary to meet the needs of a variety of students. The UNC System administrators voiced a slight preference for grades, especially those C or better, for more options in the future, and assured NCDPI that they will continue to work with our students to mitigate any negative implications of COVID-19 in future application processes.*

## **RESOURCES AND INFORMATION TO FOLLOW:**

- Additional Guidance regarding approved grading policy with accompanying webinar
- PowerSchool Technical Guidance for LEAs/Charters with clear instructions for data managers
- Grading Policy Implementation Resources for district/school/teacher use
- Joint communication from NCDPI and UNC System Office regarding support of NC students

## **NCDPI WORKGROUP MEMBERS:**

Sneha Shah-Coltrane, Chair; Dr. Jeremy Gibbs, Co-Chair; Dr. Rachel McBroom, Co-Chair; Dr. Lori Carlin; Beth Cross; Stephanie Cyrus; Tom Daugherty; Dr. Kristi Day; Dave Machado; Dreama McCoy; Trey Michael; Melany Paden; and Dr. Chris Triolo.

LEA Superintendent Representatives: Dr. Jeffrey Booker and Dr. Patrick Miller

SBE Student Representatives: Meredith Gaskill and Nate Kolk-Tomberlin

NOTE: For Graduating Seniors grading policy, see SBE approval from March 27, 2020.

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