

CAPISTRANO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
**BOARD REPORT**

To: Board of Trustees

From: Susan Holliday, Associate Superintendent, Education Services

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Elementary

Date: April 29, 2020

Board Item: Second Reading – Emergency Board Policy E5121.2, Grades/Evaluation of  
Student Achievement

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**HISTORY**

A review of Board Policy 5121.1, *Grades/Evaluation of Student Achievement*, determined that aspects of the policy needed to be revised based on current circumstances related to school closures. The policy was adopted in 1997 and was further revised in 2019. The changes are being applied to an emergency policy that is recommended to Trustees for approval.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

California education officials issued [guidance on graduation requirements and grading for high school seniors](#) on April 1, 2020. State Schools Chief Tony Thurmond stated that the guidance was drafted in collaboration with local districts and higher education institutions. California’s Department of Education provided the following general guidance:

- The assignment of grades and credits is a local determination made in consultation with teachers.
- There is nothing in the Education Code which governs whether a class can be offered as credit/no credit, pass/fail or a modified A–D
- Ensure that grading policies hold students harmless for their spring grades and the transition to distance learning.
- Grading policies take the needs of all students into account, including those of English Learners, homeless and foster youth, and those with differing access to digital learning and other tools or materials.

- For students with disabilities, any changes to learning strategies or grading policies should, as appropriate, be done in conjunction with the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) to ensure that the changes respond to their learning needs.
- Local Education Agencies and teachers establish policies for how students can make up late or missing work due to illness
- As defined in Education Code § 49066 (a), which states: “When grades are given for any course of instruction taught in a school district, the grade given to each pupil shall be the grade determined by the teacher of the course and the determination of the pupil’s grade by the teacher, in the absence of clerical or mechanical mistake, fraud, bad faith, or incompetency, shall be final.”

The Orange County Department of Education strongly recommended that districts approach grading through a growth mindset and embrace “do no harm” for this semester. “Do no harm” would be that no student receives a failing grade during the spring semester. Instead, if a student has not completed work to sufficiently assess their progress during the second semester, a “No Credit” or “Incomplete” could be given where students would be provided the opportunity to finish the course, with no penalties, during the summer and/or when school resumes in the fall.

University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) systems as well as the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities have stated their willingness to accept grades of Pass/No Pass or Credit/No Credit in lieu of traditional letter grades. Similar statements have been provided by the following universities: Harvard, Stanford, Columbia, University of Michigan, Duke, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Vanderbilt, Cornell, and Boston College. The UC Office of the President provided the following statement to the District on April 9, 2020: “UC cannot prescribe to individual schools or districts how to choose to implement their grading policies. UC will accept A-G courses from schools, even if they are using a mixed grading model for spring/summer 2020. We are working to ensure that all of our campuses are aware of our position on this matter.”

As far as we know the following Orange County School Districts have adopted or are strongly considering the following grading practices:

- Santa Ana Unified School District will use a Pass/Incomplete model.
- Los Alamitos Unified School District will use a traditional A, B, C, and D model with no F grades being accepted.
- Anaheim Union High School District will use a traditional model with no F grades being accepted.
- Fullerton Union High School District will use a traditional model with no F grades being accepted.
- Tustin Unified will use a Credit/Incomplete model.
- Garden Grove Unified will use a Credit/No Credit model.
- Irvine Unified School District will use a Credit/No Credit model.

## **CURRENT CONSIDERATIONS**

Staff recommends approval of the following revisions being recommended for Emergency Board Policy E5121.2, *Grades/Evaluation of Student Achievement*.

### **K-12**

During periods of school closure or other emergencies in which distance learning is provided, teachers will provide grades to students that reflect a “do no harm” approach during the period of the closure. A student’s grade on the report card should not be negatively impacted by the school closure. If a student received a particular mark at an earlier reporting period prior to the closure, the student would be unable to receive a lower mark on the subsequent reporting period.

### **Elementary**

Teachers continue to provide grades on the standards based report card as a means of offering feedback, motivating, and holding students accountable for work they complete. However, following the “do no harm” approach, students will not receive numerical scores for the third trimester in which schools were providing distance learning for 10 of the 12 weeks of instruction. Instead, students will receive a score of “Standard Met” or “Progressing Towards Expectation/Needs Review” in place of the scores of 1-4 (which are the regular report card scores). This recommendation is a change from that recommended to Trustees on April 15, 2020. Staff received feedback from teachers, including CUEA leadership, that previous recommendations would be difficult to implement during this distance learning period. Additionally, it appears that most other local districts are not providing traditional grades at the Elementary level and are instead using marks similar to those recommended here. Staff will provide guidance to teachers on criteria for determining which marks to give to a student that is consistent with a “do no harm” approach. Staff will also provide communication to families to outline and explain the emergency grading marks. Education Services will continue to work with the Capistrano Unified Education Association (CUEA) and the report card committee members to review standards identified on the standards based report card and clarify the expectations for progress monitoring and marks. Staff will also examine the impact of the school closures on student progress and identify potential interventions to address learning loss due to the closures in either the summer or Fall of 2020 depending on the ending of social distancing measures.

### **Secondary**

Teachers will continue to provide traditional grades to students as a means of offering feedback, motivating, and holding students accountable for work they complete. Twelve-week grade reports were provided to high school students and families informing them of their grade as of March 13, 2020. Middle school students and families will be provided a mid-quarter update on their progress during distance learning after May 1, 2020. Teachers assign grades, it is not the choice of a student on whether they receive a grade or alternative mark. Education Code as well as current policy provides flexibility for teachers to determine what types of activities may be calculated when

determining a student's grade. Proposed draft Emergency Board Policy E5121.2 limits the marks that can be used for secondary students to the traditional A, B, and C grades with an additional "CR" for Credit or "NC" for No Credit. Students will remain competitive with the recommendation of implementing traditional letter grades.

The revisions being recommended will allow for the mark of "CR" for Credit for teachers to assign to students during the current school closures for students who are not able to demonstrate proficiency that would warrant a grade of A, B, or C, but who do not deserve a D or an F based on their circumstances. A "CR" would not hurt or help a student's grade point average (GPA). Also, the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) systems as well as schools such as Stanford and Harvard have indicated their willingness to accept a "CR" as an indication that a student has successfully passed a class. The UC and CSU systems have also stated that a grade of "CR" would not impact a student's GPA.

Students who are not successful with distance learning during a period of closure or other emergencies, will be assigned the following mark:

NC = No Credit

Students who receive an NC will be provided with additional opportunities during summer school or through credit recovery or other programs during the school year to make-up work or retake a class for credit. A grade of NC will not negatively impact a student's GPA.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There is no financial impact.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended the Board President recognize Susan Holliday, Associate Superintendent, Education Services, to present this item.

Following discussion, it is recommended the Board of Trustees approve Emergency Board Policy E5121.2, *Grades/Evaluations of Student Achievement*.

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**APPROVED BY:** Susan Holliday, Associate Superintendent, Education Services

**GRADES/EVALUATION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

It will be the purpose of the District and the school system to report student progress in terms of District, school, class and individual goals. Parents will receive information from the school on a periodic basis indicating student progress toward these goals.

The Superintendent or designee shall establish and regularly evaluate a uniform grading system. Principals shall ensure that student grades conform to this system. Nothing herein shall conflict with a teacher’s ability to assess student work as defined in Education Code § 49066 (a), which states: “When grades are given for any course of instruction taught in a school district, the grade given to each pupil shall be the grade determined by the teacher of the course and the determination of the pupil’s grade by the teacher, in the absence of clerical or mechanical mistake, fraud, bad faith, or incompetency, shall be final.”

During periods of school closure or other emergencies in which distance learning is provided, teachers will provide grades to students that reflect a “do no harm” approach during the period of the closure. A student’s grade on the report card should not be negatively impacted by the school closure. If a student received a particular mark at an earlier reporting period prior to the closure, the student would be unable to receive a lower mark in the subsequent reporting period.

**Elementary School Student Progress**

In the fall of each school year, students in Grades K-5 take literacy skills assessments to assess their individual skill levels in reading readiness and/or reading fluency.

In the fall of each school year, parents shall be invited to attend a Parent-Teacher conference to review their child’s academic progress-to-date and, if needed, develop a Family School Partnership Plan and/or Intervention Plan to ensure the child’s continued progress in the current school year. Students will be encouraged, as appropriate, to attend fall Parent-Teacher Conferences.

Report cards will be issued at the end of each-trimester-reporting period. Student progress in reading, writing, mathematics, history/social science, science, physical education, and the arts will be reported in relation to grade-level performance standards.

Number marks will be issued in subject matter as follows:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 4 = Excelling at reporting period expectations
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3 = Meeting reporting period expectations
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2 = Progressing toward reporting period expectations
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1 = Insufficient progress toward reporting period expectations

Standards Met/Needs Review

\_\_\_\_\_ Marks will be issued in subject matter as follows:

**GRADES/EVALUATION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT** (continued)SM = Standard MetNR = Progressing Towards Expectation/Needs Review

~~Effort marks will be issued in subject matter and in skills and behaviors that support learning as follows:~~

~~\_\_\_\_\_ O = Outstanding~~  
~~\_\_\_\_\_ S = Satisfactory~~  
~~\_\_\_\_\_ AC = Area of concern~~  
~~\_\_\_\_\_ U = Unsatisfactory~~

English Language Learners (ELL) will receive progress reports on levels of English language fluency.

Individual schools and teachers may supplement report cards with additional information throughout the school year as they deem appropriate.

In the winter and the spring of each year, students retake the literacy skills assessments as a means to monitor continued progress and growth toward end-of-year benchmark goals.

At the end of the second reporting period, parents shall be invited to attend a second Parent-Teacher Conference, as needed, to review student progress-to-date and consider additional strategies for success through the end of the school year.

**Secondary School Student Progress**

In middle schools, grades are available in the parent portal at the end of each quarter. Parents may request to have report cards mailed home if they do not have portal access. ~~Mid-quarter progress reports will be issued to students in danger of failing (D or F grades) not later than the week during which the end of the first half of the marking period or instruction for the course falls.~~

In high schools, grades are available in the parent portal at the end of each 6-week grading period and at the end of each semester. Parents may request to have report cards mailed home if they do not have portal access. ~~Passing semester grades for high school courses will be awarded five credits per course. Passing grades include A, B, C, or CR-D grades. In addition, teachers must notify parents of the danger of failing a semester course during the last six weeks of the semester if no prior notification has been given.~~

Letter grades will be issued at the secondary level in subject matter as follows:

A = Excellent progress  
 B = Above average progress  
 C = Average progress

**GRADES/EVALUATION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT** (continued)

~~D = Below average F = Failing~~

Student semester grade points will be computed for courses on the following numerical value for all courses taken for the purpose of determining grade point average (GPA): A = 4; B=3; C = 2; ~~D = 1; F = 0~~

For Advanced Placement and Honors level courses only, grade points will be computed on the following numerical value: A = 5; B = 4; C = 3; ~~D = 1; F = 0~~

When students with honors credits on their transcripts transfer from out of district or out of state schools, only courses designated as honors by CUSD and approved by the University of California will be recognized.

~~In an entry level elective course, Evaluation of student work~~ may be denoted using the following symbols:

CR = Credit

~~NC = No credit~~

During periods of school closure or other emergencies, teachers may use the CR following mark to designate that the student should receive credit for the course when there was not adequate data to assign a traditional mark or individual circumstances warrant that an exception to other marks should be provided for a student:

~~P = Pass~~

Students who receive a CRP will receive credit for the class and will be allowed to enroll in the next class in the course sequence. The grade of PCR will not be calculated in the student's GPA.

Students who are unable to demonstrate proficiency during distance learning and during ~~not successful with distance learning during~~ a period of closure or other emergencies, will be assigned the following mark:

~~INC = No Credit Incomplete~~

Students who receive an INC will be provided with additional opportunities during summer school or through credit recovery or other programs during the school year to make-up work or retake a class for full credit. A grade of NC will not negatively impact a student GPA.

Citizenship marks will be issued as follows:

~~O = Attitude and behavior are outstanding S = Attitude and behavior are satisfactory S = Behavior needs improvement~~

**GRADES/EVALUATION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT** (continued)

~~U = Attitude and behavior are unsatisfactory~~

A teacher shall base student grades on their mastery of course content based on District standards. Students shall have the opportunity to demonstrate mastery through a variety of methods, including, but not limited to tests, projects, portfolios, class discussion, attendance, effort, student conduct, and/or work habits as appropriate. A student's physical education grade may not be adversely affected by the student's failure to wear standardized physical education apparel when such failure is a result of circumstances beyond the student's control. (Education Code 49066) In the event of a disagreement related to a student's grade, a parent may request a change to a student's record via the process outlined in Board Policy 5125.3.

If a test or assignment used by a teacher to evaluate student learning becomes compromised, a teacher has the discretion to disregard the results of the test/assignment. To remedy the situation, a teacher may administer a new test/assignment, weight the test/assignment and assign a letter grade to the test/assignment, or assign a subjective grade. In the event that a compromise occurs at the end of a quarter, grading period, or semester, the teacher has the discretion to rely on previous assessment results in the marking period. (Education Code 49066 and 49067)

*Legal Reference:***EDUCATION CODE***48070 Promotion and retention 48431.6 Required systematic review**49066 Grades; finalization; physical education class**49067 Mandated regulations regarding pupil's achievement**Johnson v. Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board of Education (App. 2 Dist. 1986 224 Cal. Rptr. 885, 179 C.A. 3d 593)*

## Policy

adopted: August 18, 1997

revised: February 11, 2008

revised: March 13, 2019

**CAPISTRANO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

San Juan Capistrano, California