

BOARD MEMO

Date: May 6, 2021

For ACTION

For INFORMATION

Board Agenda: Yes

No

FROM: Gerald R. Mann, Jr., Ed.D., Executive Director of Instructional Support
Darrell Sampson, Executive Director of Student Support Teams
Peter Balas, Principal, T.C. Williams High School
Jennifer Abbruzzese, Director of Policy and Board Initiatives
Marya Runkle, Director of Education and Business Applications

THROUGH: Terri H. Mozingo, Ed.D., Chief of Teaching, Learning and Leadership
Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Meagan Alderton, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: **Adjustments to Secondary Grading Practices for SY 2020-2021 in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:

Goal 1: Systemic Alignment

Goal 2: Instructional Excellence

Goal 3: Student Accessibility and Support

SY 2019-2020 FOCUS AREA:

Focus Area 1: Educational Equity

FY 2020 BUDGET PRIORITY:

Academics

SUMMARY:

In response to the unprecedented challenges faced by students during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, staff recommends adjusting secondary grading practices as follows for the 2020-2021 school year. As these adjustments in implementation do not alter [IKC-R's \(Regulations Governing the Grading Policy\)](#) current provisions, School Board action is not required. These proposals continue to be shared with school and administrative staff to obtain additional insight.

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Recommendations for Semester 1 (High School Credit-Bearing Courses only):

Final Exams & Final Grades

Schools will review grades from courses that ended at the first semester to determine whether omitting the student's final exam would have resulted in a higher grade. If so, the final exam grade will be deleted, the final grade recalculated, and a grade change completed.

School administrators will work with central office staff to conduct this review, with a deadline for completion of May 28, 2021.

Recommendations for Semester 2 for all Secondary Students:

Final Exams & Final Grades

If a final exam for a year-long or second semester course is not given, the formula for final grade calculation will automatically adjust to:

- 25% per quarter for year-long courses
- 50% per quarter for semester long courses

This is already provided for in the current version of [Regulation IKC-R](#).

Final exams for a year-long or second semester course will only be counted if it raises the student's final grade for the course:

- The lowest grade that may be awarded on a final exam at the end of the 2020-2021 school year is a 50%.
- Final exams may be project-based or performance-based opportunities that include components begun prior to the final exam date

Note that not every course is required to have a final exam per [Regulation IKC-R](#).

Reassessment & Make-Up Opportunities

Third Quarter: Students will be allowed to complete any reassessments (up to a maximum revised grade of 80%) and makeup work (without penalty) by COB on Friday, May 21, 2021.

Third & Fourth Quarters: Students will be provided with an automatic opportunity for reassessment on any assessments for which a grade of D or less was earned:

- A reassessment could result in a maximum revised grade of 80% (e.g., test corrections, remediation, completion of the retake, etc.).

Fourth Quarter: Seniors will be allowed to complete any reassessments (up to a maximum revised grade of 80%) and make-up work (without penalty) by COB on Wednesday, June 2, 2021 in alignment with the grading, exam, and graduation calendar for graduating seniors.

Students in grades six through eleven will be allowed to complete any reassessments (up to a maximum revised grade of 80%) and make-up work (without penalty) by COB on Friday, June 18, 2021.

Fourth Quarter: Schools will ensure that any heavily weighted grading category (such as summative assessments) has four or more entries to properly reflect mastery.

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BACKGROUND:

On Friday, March 13, 2020, ACPS closed its schools due to the Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic in order to promote physical distancing and the safety and wellness of school staff, students, and their families. On the same day, Governor Northam ordered all Virginia schools closed for a period of two weeks. On March 23, 2020 the [Governor ordered all Virginia schools to remain closed](#) for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year.

On June 9, 2020, Governor Northam “[announced a phased reopening](#) of K-12 schools, which gradually permitted in-person instruction to resume while prioritizing the health and safety of students and staff. In order to minimize the disparate impacts closures have had on students,” the reopening plan (revised July 9, 2020), “prioritize[d] the needs of students who have been most impacted by school building closures, and for whom in-person instruction is most beneficial.” ([VDOE, July 6, 2020](#))

ACPS submitted its reopening plan, [Virtual Plus+](#), to the Virginia Department of Education on August 14, 2020, and began the 2020-2021 school year remotely through virtual, synchronous and asynchronous instruction.

In March 2021, ACPS students began phasing back in for hybrid (concurrent), in-person instruction.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Superintendent recommends the School Board review the proposed adjustments to secondary grading practices for the 2020-2021 school year.

IMPACT:

By adjusting implementation of secondary grading practices ([Regulation IKC-R](#)) for the 2020-2021 school year, ACPS will:

- Recognize the ongoing impact of providing new instruction to students remotely and to address learning loss due to the spring 2020 school closures (Executive Order 53, March 2020);
- Align with the Virginia Department of Education’s (VDOE’s) return to school plan implementing Virginia’s phased reopening of K-12 schools during the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- Ensure maximum flexibility and benefit for ACPS students while maintaining opportunities for mastery of content standards.

CONTACT:

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