

ECSD Students, Teachers and Parents:

The vast majority of students in Eagle County Schools have remained academically engaged throughout the past month. Teachers have worked tirelessly to create remote learning opportunities, and have reached out to personally contact students who were disengaged in school work. Parents have proven to be amazing partners in helping kids keep up with school work. We are sincerely grateful for all the hard work and cooperation we have witnessed in recent weeks.

As traditional instructional methods have given way to remote learning, so must we consider adjusting traditional grading methods.

Adjusting ECS grading practices should reinforce our students' motivation to work hard on their school tasks, maintain as much normalcy as possible, and add flexibility in response to the variety of hardships occurring in this period of Covid-19.

The grading practices adopted by Eagle County Schools adhere to three core values:

1. Hard working students should be acknowledged and given the opportunity to maintain normal, college preparatory grades.
2. Students who have been unable to remain engaged because of circumstances beyond their control should not be punished with bad grades or held back from matriculating.
3. All students deserve timely and actionable feedback on their work, as well as opportunities to catch up when circumstances allow.

Eagle County Schools adjusted grading practices empower students, parents and teachers to tailor grading practices to the circumstances of each student, while providing options for those who wish to keep traditional grades, and alternatives for those who desire more flexibility and empathy.

ECSD grading practices are differentiated by level, allowing elementary, middle and high schools to implement practices that best fit the needs of their students.

#### Elementary School Grading Practices:

Students will receive timely and actionable feedback on the work they complete. Feedback is essential in promoting growth and celebrating success. Students will not receive grades on daily assignments, so that teachers can focus attention on quality feedback. At the end of the semester all students will receive a grade of "Pass" or "NG" (no grade) based on their ability to stay engaged in school work throughout the remainder of the year. Students will not be retained if they have been unable to maintain engagement in school via remote learning, but a grade of "NG" informs future teachers that remediation may be required. No elementary students will receive grades of "F" or "1" on the Standards-Based grading scale.

#### Middle School Grading Practices:

Students will receive timely and actionable feedback on the work they complete. Feedback is essential in promoting growth and celebrating success. Normal grading will continue throughout the semester, with a customized option for those who need it. Semester grades may be overridden to "Pass" or "NG" (no grade) at the end of semester if requested by a parent or teacher. The cutoff to earn a "Pass" grade is 60%. Principals also have discretion to override grades based on circumstances. No student will receive grades of F or a score that indicates failure on the Standards-Based grading scale. Once overridden, grades are part of the permanent record for the student, and may not be changed back.

#### High School Grading Practices:

Students will receive timely and actionable feedback on the work they complete. Feedback is essential in promoting growth and celebrating success. Normal grading will continue throughout the semester, with an option for those who need it. Semester grades may be overridden to "Pass" or "NG" (no grade) at the end of semester if requested by a parent or teacher. The cutoff to earn a "Pass" grade is 60%. Principals also have discretion to override grades based on circumstances. Parents must provide approval for grades to be converted to "Pass" or "NG". No students will receive grades of "F" or "1" on the Standards-Based grading scale. Once overridden, grades will be part of the student's permanent record and may not be changed back.

"Pass" and "NG" grades will be GPA neutral, meaning they will not impact GPA positively or negatively.

"Pass" and "NG" grades will not impact eligibility for academic honors or awards.

No "F" grades will be assigned second semester. If students have not remained engaged in academics during 4th Quarter they will receive a grade of "NG", and opportunities to recover credit over the summer or when school resumes in the fall. "NG" is synonymous with no credit, but without the GPA penalty of what would happen traditionally if a student were to fail a course. The election or assigning of "NG" for a course that is required for graduation will indicate that a student will need to take action to recover the required course credit in the future. Credit recovery options will be offered over the summer months, this will be somewhat different from the traditional summer school that has been offered in the past. More information will be forthcoming.

Most ECSD high school students participate in sports or activities. To maintain eligibility next fall, students must pass 5 classes this semester. Grades of A, B, C, D or Pass will count towards their eligibility.

#### FAQ's:

**1. Q: Must "pass" or "no credit" be applied to all classes?**

A: No, that option may be selected on a class-by-class basis. It can be applied to one or all classes.

**2. Q: What is the threshold to earn a "Pass" grade?**

A: An end of semester percentage of 60% qualifies for "Pass", lower than 60% qualifies for "no grade".

**3. Q: If students fail classes this semester, will they automatically be converted to "no credit"?**

A: Yes. No students will receive "F" grades for 2nd Semester 2019-2020.

**4. Q: How would the "pass" or "no grade" options impact my GPA?**

A: Neither would impact GPA at all. Both are GPA neutral.

**5. Q: Are students eligible for academic honors if they use the "pass" or "no grade" option?**

A: Yes. Students will remain eligible for academic honors (valedictorian, magna cum laude, etc.) if they receive "Pass" or "NG" grades.

**6. Q: If "pass" or "no credit" are selected now, can they be changed later?**

A: No. Grades cannot be adjusted once they are finalized on an official transcript.

**7. Q: What is the deadline to decide on the "Pass" or "NG" option?**

A: The deadline to decide is May 18. The default grading system in middle and high school will be traditional A-F unless the decision to use "Pass" or "NG" is exercised.

**8. Q: What is the process to request "Pass" or "NG"?**

A: No later than May 18, 2020, parents should email the teacher of the class(es) for which the change is requested. Teachers and principals may also initiate the process by emailing or calling parents directly.

**9. Q: Does the NCAA acknowledge "pass" grades?**

A: Quoted from the [NCAA website](#), "Maybe, these grades may satisfy your core-course requirements. The NCAA Eligibility Center will assign your high school's lowest passing grade for a pass/fail class so long as the course receives credit toward graduation."

**10. Q: Will a "pass" or "no credit" grade impact my ability to be accepted into college?**

A: Probably not. Colleges and universities make their own individual decisions, however, it is reasonable to assume most colleges and universities will accept pass/fail grades as they have moved to this system currently, and some major universities, like Harvard, have stated that students will not be disadvantaged in the admissions process due to pass/fail grades.

#### Retention:

Students will not be considered for retention due to the COVID19 crisis. We will continue to follow our Board of Education Policy and individual school procedures. While we recognize that some students may struggle with remote learning and parents may have concerns about their child's progress, "The philosophy of the Eagle County Schools is to be sensitive to individual student needs, to identify challenges early, to effect corrective actions, to enlist parental support, to help students learn to be responsible and accountable, and to retain students only in appropriate instances" (ECSD Board of Education [Policy IKE](#), Promotion, Retention, and Acceleration of Students).

At the Preschool level these decisions have been discussed at parent teacher conferences in late February and early March. For students who are already in this process, the observation component will be modified since we will not return to campus this year. Families in this process will be contacted individually.

At the elementary and middle school levels, parent or teacher concerns about retention would have been shared in December, and families would have already been notified if retention was recommended. If students were not previously identified for retention according to Policy IKE, they will not be considered for retention now.

As a school district we are aware that remote learning poses many challenges for some children and families, while other students are able to excel with this method of learning.

All of our students are unique learners and each their circumstances in this time of Covid-19 are unique as well. Because of this, we understand that student learning will be impacted in different ways and we are working to meet each learner's needs as much as we are able in the present. We are preparing for the fall to be able to fill in the gaps and capitalize on any accelerations of learning that have occurred in our transition to remote learning.

Thank you to all of you for all that you are doing to help each of our learner's progress as much as possible during these challenging times.

Respectfully,

Philip Qualman, Superintendent

Dr. Katie Jarot, Assistant Superintendent

Melisa Rewold-Thuon, Assistant Superintendent

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Eagle County School District

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