

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOL
DISTRICT #624**



**SPECIAL
WORK SESSION
MEETING PACKET**

April 20, 2020

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the White Bear Lake Area School District, the community at the forefront of educational excellence, honoring our legacy and courageously building the future, is to ensure each student realizes their unique talents and abilities, and makes meaningful contributions with local and global impact through a vital system distinguished by:

- *Students who design and create their own future*
- *A culture that respects diverse people and ideas*
- *Safe, nurturing and inspiring environments*
- *Exceptional staff and families committed to student success*
- *Abundant and engaged community partners*

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 624
WHITE BEAR LAKE, MN 55110**

To: Members of the School Board

From: Wayne A. Kazmierczak
Superintendent of Schools

Date: April 15, 2020

A special work session of the White Bear Lake Area School Board will be held on **Monday, April 20, 2020** at 5:30 p.m. via electronic conferencing under Minnesota Statute 13D.021. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the grading system for our Distance Learning Plan.

AGENDA

A. PROCEDURAL ITEMS

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call

B. DISCUSSION ITEM

1. Grading System for Distance Learning Plan

C. ADJOURNMENT

AGENDA ITEM: **Grading System for Distance Learning Plan**

MEETING DATE: **April 20, 2020**

SUGGESTED DISPOSITION: **Discussion Item**

CONTACT PERSON(S): **Dr. Wayne Kazmierczak, Superintendent**
 Dr. Alison Gillespie, Principal on Special Assignment

BACKGROUND:

The Board will discuss the high school grading system for the distance learning plan.

DISTANCE LEARNING: HIGH SCHOOL GRADING

4.20.2020

OBJECTIVES

- Decision-making process
- Information Gathering and Examination
- Recommendation
- Q and A

HIGH SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM:

DR. ALISON GILLESPIE, PRINCIPAL ON SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT

ANGELA NELSON, WBLAHS-NORTH CAMPUS PRINCIPAL

DON BOSCH, WBLAHS- SOUTH CAMPUS PRINCIPAL

ASSOCIATE PRINCIPALS AND DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

ADDITIONAL GUESTS: TIFFANY DITTRICH, PRESIDENT OF WBLAE LOCAL #7286

MILES WEBB, CULTURAL LIAISON

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

- Implementation of Distance Learning
- Unified 6-12 Approach
- Examined each decision through:
 - Equity Commitment and 4-Way Decision Making Protocol
 - MDE guidance
 - WBLAS Strategic Plan
- Commitment to gathering input and reviewing research

White Bear Lake Schools' Equity Commitment

To nurture the whole student, we disrupt systemic inequities by recognizing, honoring, and embracing all cultures with humility and respect.

4-Way Equity Decision Making Protocol

1. How does this help to provide opportunities to students who have been marginalized within the system in the past?
2. How does this help to ensure equitable access for all?
3. How does this help to eliminate barriers based on race/ethnicity, gender, disability, age, or other protected groups?
4. How does this ensure that the same rigorous standards for academic performance exist for all students?

INFORMATION USED TO INFORM THE DECISION

- MDE Equity Reflection
 - Focus needs to be on strengthening relationships with students and families
 - Educators need to “be more intentional with connecting with our Indigenous, black and brown students”
 - “Grading should be used to ensure students are aware of their progress and to nurture their curiosity and intrinsic motivation”

INFORMATION USED TO INFORM THE DECISION

- Student voice via student check-in form
- Calling colleges/universities
- Reaching out to other districts and principals of 6-12 schools
- BLT and teacher feedback
- Commentary of experts in the field of grading about grading during the COVID-19 situation reviewed
- District level support
- Community input via parent and family emails, voicemails, social media posts, student petition, student emails, teacher emails, teacher phone calls, and virtual meetings

RESEARCH

- The purpose of grading is to measure what a student knows and is able to do in relation to essential standards.
- When given a choice, students will be hesitant to shift so far away from the norm (A-F grading).
- Grades should measure learning and not be a consequence.
- Grading during a pandemic could actually be measuring
 - A student's response to stress
 - The level at which COVID-19 has impacted a student's life directly.
 - Access to resources, time, and a learning schedule.

Philosophical question: Do grades motivate students to learn? Research would say they don't and that they actually get in the way of true learning.

DUAL OPTION SYSTEM---WHY NOT?

- Creates a system where grades are seen as “better” than pass/fail
- Some students who would choose the letter grade option can’t because of impact of COVID-19 and/or distance learning
- Social pressure on students:
 - Choose Pass/No Pass- “Lesser” option, not as hard of a worker as other students.
 - Lose status in GPA and/or class rank
 - Choose the letter grade option- “Better” option
 - Raise GPA and/or class rank
- Inequity in GPA and class rank due to choice this semester, but also in comparison to other semesters
- Consideration of either posting “Q3 grade” and/or freezing grades before Spring Break- Why Not?

PASS/NO PASS GRADING---WHY?

- No student should be disadvantaged by distance learning
- No way of measuring the impact that COVID-19 is having on families and students
 - Access to quiet study areas or support at home for academics
 - Caring for ill family members who are either high risk or sick with COVID-19
 - Caring for younger siblings or assisting in running the household
 - Need school support for accessing content due to level of English language, intervention support needs, etc.
- Ensure no student moves down or up in grade point average (GPA) and/or class rank

RECOMMENDATION

PASS/NO PASS CRITERIA

Pass	Student demonstrates progress towards an understanding of essential learning.
No Pass	No evidence of progress towards an understanding of essential learning.

EMPHASIS ON LEARNING

- We are looking at this holistically, not segmented per individual learning opportunity
- Progress is measured based on formative assessments and **FEEDBACK**.
- Reminders: Formative Assessments should be used to inform us (as educators), to determine what learning should come next, and can be manifested in a variety of ways.

GIVING FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS

- Since grading percentages will not be used as a form of feedback, collaborative teams are working together to determine how feedback will be given to students around their learning progress.
- Professional development on the power of feedback will be ongoing for teachers.

DUAL OPTION SYSTEM

Grade	<u>Option 1:</u> Pass/No Pass	Grade	<u>Option 2:</u> A/B/C/Pass/No Pass
Pass (P)	Student demonstrates progress towards an understanding of essential learning.	A	Student consistently and independently demonstrates <i>thorough</i> understanding of the standards/skills.
		B	Student consistently and independently demonstrates understanding of the standards/skills.
		C	Student demonstrates inconsistent understanding of the standards/skills.
		Pass (P)	Student demonstrates progress towards an understanding of essential learning.
No Pass (NP)	No evidence of progress towards an understanding of essential learning.	No Pass (NP)	No evidence of progress towards an understanding of essential learning.

SKYWARD AND FAMILY ACCESS

- When marking grades in Skyward (using a 9 point scale)
 - 9 = A
 - 8 = B
 - 7 = C
 - 6 = P
 - 5 = NP
- Students and families will only be able to see the whole number scores listed above for each assignment entered
- Staff can edit the end of semester grade to an A, B, C, Pass regardless of what is entered along the way
- Staff will change letter grades to “Pass” for all student who did not opt-in into the A,B,C scale by May 1st.

*No student can earn a score below 5 on any assignment/formative assessment

DUAL-OPTION SYSTEM

- Students who wish to “opt-in” to the A, B, C, P, NP (Option 2) grading scale have until **Friday, May 1** to indicate this on a Google Form.
- Grades from spring semester will not be factored into GPA and/or class rank.
- If a student states they want to opt-in to Option 2, but then encounters difficulty, they can opt back into Option 1. Once opting for Option 1, they cannot return to Option 2.
- Students will have letter grades on their transcript to assist as they navigate post-secondary options.

EMPHASIS ON LEARNING

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GIVING FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS UNDER A TWO OPTION SYSTEM

- Teachers will continue work in their collaborative teams.
- Consider layering additional enrichment options for students who opt into Option 2
 - Consider having students create what these options are. The critical thinking exercised to create their own summative assessment may help demonstrate understanding at a deeper level
- Additional professional development time will be provided.

White Bear Lake Area Schools
April 13 School Board Meeting
Public Forum Comments

Veronica Hoffman

4927 Lake Avenue White Bear Lake MN 55110

If the Pass/No Pass system is not negotiable, as I have been told, then the parents and students are going to need clear criteria for what constitutes "Pass" for each teacher. Also, how will cumulative GPA be calculated? I expect it will only be figured on 7 semesters then instead of 8? More information is needed than was sent in the notice. The lack of information and the way this notice was sent out is completely lacking in professionalism and shows no courtesy to the families that support this district. An apology for the emotional impact this had on the students should be acknowledged.

Kate Hoffman

4927 lake avenue

I am a student who takes higher-level classes and all of my friends take higher-level classes. It's fair to say that we have given up a lot throughout high school to obtain the grades that we have. Many of us put in far more hours of studying and dedication to our work than the average student. In response to Principal Bosch's comments about how students aren't motivated by grades, I have to say that it is completely false. As a student who is working towards acceptance to a highly selective college, the majority of my motivation comes from wanting A's and occasional B's. It's truly heartbreaking and unfair to lower students of our level to the same level as students who have all C's and simply don't work as hard. It feels as though all of our dedication has been for nothing. Furthermore, I believe the distribution of your decision was emotionally destructive to many students due to the complete lack of information about how cumulative GPA will now be calculated. I do understand your concerns for some students who are struggling at this time but to take away the opportunity to learn and improve ourselves as higher-level students is extremely disappointing.

Michael Hoffman

4927 Lake Avenue

Members of the White Bear Lake School Board,

On behalf of the students at both North Campus and South Campus, we would like to express our concerns about the pass/no pass grading system. We understand that this decision was not made lightly and that many students will do better under the pass/no pass method of grading. However, we feel that the more equitable solution for all students is to let each student choose which grading system will benefit them the most.

Students across the district right now recognize the struggles that many of our own peers are facing during this difficult time. Becoming self-motivated while at home for the majority of the day can be a daunting task, and tackling all schoolwork in a different environment with limited resources is challenging. Some students have complicated home situations where they might be working or have less time to dedicate to school. Some homes do not have the resources to learn effectively at home. This makes the option for pass/no pass necessary, but it should not be forced onto all students.

Mahtomedi High School is going as far as to allow their students to choose whether they will be graded with a pass/no pass system or the A through F system for each individual class and giving them until May 29th to make their decision. The students of White Bear Lake are asking to be allowed to choose to be graded with either the pass/no pass system or the A through F system for all of their classes. White Bear

students are asking for a choice that will be less complicated for the district to implement than the choice that a nearby district has already implemented.

Allowing students to choose whether they will be graded with the pass/no pass system or the A through F system is a decision the district can make in order to help the greatest number of students possible. One large demographic that wants to have the A through F grading system is the students in weighted classes. Under the pass/no pass system, no grades will be weighted. This means that AP students will lose the good academic record that they have worked on during third quarter. Furthermore, students who took one or more of the many semester-long AP classes are faced with an additional problem. Students in first semester courses are getting weighted grades for their hard work while students taking the same AP class in the second semester will not get a weighted grade for doing the same work.

The time and effort many students have put into their classes this semester will be discredited because of this new system. We realize that not everything done in school is reflected in a grade, and our learning is what truly matters, but the school system is set up in a way that values grades highly in education, which makes the pass/no pass system very disappointing for many students. As much as learning is the goal of education, grades are the motivation to learn.

Many highly motivated students have already begun to lose the drive to work hard in classes that they do not enjoy due to the implementation of the pass/no pass grading system. The A through F grading system keeps students motivated to work hard in their classes, whereas the pass/no pass system is leading to some students losing the motivation to put their best effort into their classes because there is no incentive to do work beyond the bare minimum. This loss of motivation and decline in learning will negatively impact students' academic futures in years to come. Students that need the A through F system to stay motivated that start doing the bare minimum under the pass/no pass system will carry over their deficit of motivation and knowledge into the future and find themselves unable to successfully readjust to an A through F grading system once school returns to normal.

We respect the intention behind implementing a pass/no pass system during this difficult time. We are simply asking for the choice to be given to students, so they can make the best decision for themselves and their unique situations during this pandemic.

We encourage you to read through the comments of our petition to get a better understanding of the individual opinions and concerns of various students and parents:

https://www.change.org/WBLHS_Grading_System_Petition

Have a terrific Monday, and Go Bears!

Sincerely,

Natalie Andres, Lauren Eckerle, Maija Gale, Jacob Grann, Tim Hannigan, Michael Hoffman, Adam Beloyed, Victoria Lang, Ernest Mattson, Arthur Perron, Gavin Rogers, Anna Ryan, Ella Sagnes, Claire Schneider, and Aidan Shepler