



MEMORANDUM

Academic Office

Date: February 24, 2022

To: Ms. Tammy Prentiss, Superintendent
District 86 Board of Education

From: Dr. Chris Covino, Assistant Superintendent for Academics

Re: Grading Update - Semester 1 of SY 21-22

Overview

As part of our commitment to providing updates, data, and analysis about our D86 grading practices, this memo and the attached presentation focus on the questions below. All data and analysis is based on student outcomes after the first semester of the 21-22 school year. All comparisons are drawn between first semester and the first semesters of the two years prior to COVID 19 - before all schools in Illinois were forced to make temporary changes to grading practices.

- What was the grade distribution for all students, and how does it compare to prior (non-Covid) years?
- What was the grade distribution for students with IEPs, and how does it compare to prior (non-Covid) years?
- How many and how were students affected by the ME/IC grade?
- How have changes to grading practices affected students in different demographic groups?
- How do category weights affect formative assessment work completion and overall course performance?
- How does the M (50% floor) affect students with high and low grades?
- Do changes in grade weight categories affect student effort/performance from one class to the next?
- What are the ongoing areas for conversation, feedback, and professional development?

Several of these questions were originally generated by our Learning Leadership and Curriculum Leadership Teams in order to monitor and assess the efficacy of changes to grading practices. These questions and associated data have been reported out during prior Board updates. Additionally, this update includes data and analysis related to new questions posed by the Board of Education during prior updates.

Providing Context

The work, discussion, research, and eventual recommendations for common grading practices are grounded in the three guiding principles below. When looking at data and discussing grading practices with stakeholder groups - such as PTAC and LLT - we ask participants to discuss the extent to which these principles are reflected in their day to day experiences.

1. **Accurate:** A grading system must **accurately communicate** a student's academic ability.
2. **Actionable:** A grading system must provide a student, parent, counselor, interventionist an indication of **what the student needs to do** to remediate, maintain, or enrich their coursework.
3. **Accountable:** A grading system must **hold students accountable** for demonstrating the knowledge / skill required to complete each course.

As a reminder, there were two changes made to grading practices for SY 21-22 (numbers 1 and 2 below) as well as two letter indicators added to the grade scale (number 3 below)

1. **Established a common, equal-interval grade scale for all courses**
 - Includes a 50% floor for assignments - *so that scores of 0 do not impact a grade 6x greater than any other grade*
2. **Established a framework for grade category weights**
 - 70% - 100% of a grade is based on Summative assessments
 - 30% to 0% of a grade is based on Formative assessments
3. **Increased the accuracy of communication**
 - Includes an M for Missing assignments - *which makes work that needs to be completed easily identifiable to all stakeholders*
 - Includes an ME when a student has missed an Essential assignment - *which makes it clear what a student MUST do in order to pass the class*

Findings: With grades finalized for Semester 1, the data indicate the following:

1. Student grades are not being harmed by changes to grading practices. Notably, there is an increase in A grades and a shift in F grades to Incomplete grades (IC).
2. Students with Incomplete grades continue to work on Essential assignments with the potential to earn a passing grade
3. Students of all demographic groups are experiencing the same shift indicated above (e.g. students with IEPs, all demographic groups, all socioeconomic groups)
4. Category weights in the gradebook have little impact on final semester grades, and inconsistent impact on students' completion of formative assessments.
5. Grades of M (Missing and worth 50%) do not artificially raise grades, nor do they prevent low grades.
6. Students' academic performance is not tied to the weight of grade categories

Grading alignment work continues to be a part of curriculum alignment conversations. In addition to monitoring and analyzing student grade data throughout semester two, our next steps include ongoing professional development conversations around formative and summative assessments as well as relearning and reassessment opportunities.