

Community Conversation
October 19, 2021
Preparedness for Post-Secondary Success
Secondary Grading Practices

Overview: Aligned with Goal 5: Preparedness for Post-Secondary Success (Every student will successfully navigate the critical transitions in their personalized learning trajectory, and will graduate from high school prepared for success in college, career, and post-secondary experiences) of the Strategic Plan, the North Thurston Public Schools Board of Directors hosted a Community Conversation focused on Outcome A. “Increased percentage of students passing classes in grades 6-9, culminating in an increased percentage of 10th grade students on track to graduate.” The Community Conversation focused on the grading principles established for the NTPS secondary schools. The purpose of the Community Conversation is to provide the Board of Directors with a forum to engage deeply with a topic and to hear from students, educators, parents, and community members about what is working well with our current grading practices and areas for improvement. Based upon the event and subsequent discussions amongst the Board members the Board establishes a visionary statement to the school community which is then interpreted by the Superintendent for determining the key actions to take to achieve the Board’s vision.

Event. The Board engaged in a Community Conversation with educators, students, parents, and community members to gain a deeper understanding of how our Board approved grading principles were implemented at the classroom level. The Board heard an overview presentation from Assistant Superintendent of School Leadership, Troy Oliver, on the current Board approved grading principles that were adopted by the Board in 2019. They then heard from a high school teacher, middle school principal, high school student, and a high school parent about how each of the grading principles was important to student success, what was going well and what were areas for improvement. The Board attended break-out sessions to listen to conversations related to each of the four grading principles. Following the Community Conversation, the Board engaged in a work session to discuss what they heard at the Community Conversation.

Board Determination:

The Board’s determination as a result of the community conversation is as follows:

1. Our Strategic Plan Goal: Preparedness for Post-Secondary Success – every student will successfully navigate the critical transitions in their personalized learning trajectory, and will graduate from high school prepared for success in college, career, and post-secondary experiences. The Board confirms that this is an important goal for us to achieve.

Further, the Board confirms that Outcome A: Increased percentage of students passing classes in grades 6-9, culminating in an increased percentage of 10th grade students on track to graduate is an important measurable outcome to attain to achieve the goal.

The Board recognizes that there are a number of actions the District has taken to support students with their academic achievement through both academic supports inside and outside the classroom as well as social emotional learning supports provided at the school site. For the purposes of this Board determination, the Board's focus is entirely on the specific grading practices implemented in North Thurston Public Schools.

2. The Community Conversation affirmed that the four grading principles have been implemented according to the Board's approval in 2019; however, the degree of successful implementation varied throughout the organization. Therefore, the Board is requiring the Superintendent to ensure that the grading practices are strengthened in all four grading principles with a specific focus on the following areas:
 - a. Consistency: The Board is concerned that although there has clearly been an improvement in consistent grading practices since 2019 because consistent grading practices are a requirement across specific courses (i.e. Algebra classes taught by multiple teachers must follow the same agreed upon grading practices), a middle or high school student has six different courses in a day and may experience a different grading expectation in each class. The Board is directing the Superintendent to establish more consistency in grading practices for students.
 - b. Communication: The Board appreciates that there has been improvement in regular communication with families about student progress through the Skyward Family Access Gradebook; yet, students and parents shared that gradebook data is not always up to date and creates confusion for students knowing their current grade and makes it difficult for parents to support students (and the teacher) by holding students accountable when grade data is not up to date. The Board is directing the Superintendent to establish clear expectations for updating grade book information and establishing system-wide notification structures that are clearly communicated to staff, students, and parents.
 - c. Empowered Learners: The Board appreciates that students are provided multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning; however, the Board is concerned that students must also take responsibility for their learning. Therefore, the Board is directing the Superintendent to create structures for student goal setting based on clear and measurable learning targets. Further, the Board believes that parents should be informed of the student's learning goals.