



Student Grading Policy During COVID-19 School Closure

April 15, 2020

In light of COVID-19 related public health orders that have closed schools in the United States, California, and Berkeley Unified School District, and which are preventing students from attending class in-person, the BUSD Board of Education hereby adopts the following alterations to Board Policy 5121, *Student Grading*. These temporary adjustments to Board policy shall last through the entirety of the COVID-19 school closure period, or until amended by the Board of Education. These temporary adjustments to BUSD policy are made by the Superintendent in keeping with Emergency Resolution 20-038, which was enacted by the Board of Education on March 13, 2020.

The intent of this temporary policy adjustment is to prevent undue adverse impact to students' Grade Point Average (GPA), academic standing, promotion to the next grade level, college application, or completion of BUSD's high school graduation requirements.

On April 2, 2020, the California Department of Education issued guidance to Local Education Agencies about grading, stating. "LEAs should weigh their policies with the lens of equity and with the primary goal of first, doing no harm to students." The guidance further specifies that pass/no pass grading options are permissible under California Education Code, and that many institutes of higher education, such as the University of California and the California State University system will accept pass/no pass grades on applications submitted in the 20-21 school year. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/gradegraduationfaq.asp>

The district adopts this temporary policy in keeping with authority granted by California Education Code Section 49067 (a): "The governing board of each school district shall prescribe regulations requiring the evaluation of each pupil's achievement for each marking period...". It continues to be understood that teachers will have the final authority to assign grades during the school closure period.

Additionally, the district adopts this temporary revision grading practices in light of Board Policy 5121, which reads in part, "The Superintendent or designee shall establish and regularly

evaluate a uniform grading system, and principals shall ensure that student grades conform to this system.” Due to the extraordinary circumstances associated with COVID-19 pandemic, the Board finds that the previous letter-based grading system is rendered unworkable.

The district has also studied statements from a variety of institutes of higher education, such as UC, CSU, and the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU), all of which are adopting modified admissions criteria so that college applicants are not adversely affected by local school district decisions to temporarily modify their grading system during the period of school closure.

This policy has been created in consultation with local labor partners, who play a critical role in the education of BUSD students, and whose cooperation and expertise are necessary in these extraordinary circumstances.

Student Grading During the COVID-19 School Closure Period

- (1) Pass/No Pass: BUSD hereby alters its current letter based grading system for students in Grades 6-12, effective during the period of COVID-19 school closures and including the fourth quarter of the 2019-2020 School Year and the second semester of the 2019-2020 school year. For all classes in these grades, students shall be marked for the fourth quarter and second semester using only “pass” or “no pass”.
- (2) Special Circumstances: Second semester “pass” and “no pass” grades should account for an individual student’s performance in the third quarter, and teachers should also attempt to account for a change in student participation during the school closure period that may have been the result of diminished access to education due to circumstances related to the school closure, such as access to a computer or the internet, disrupted housing or employment in the family, additional work responsibilities due to disrupted family income, illness due to COVID-19, or extended caretaking obligations due to mandatory school closures.
- (3) Marking Student Participation During the School Closure Period: During the time of school closures, BUSD has modified its attendance taking requirements to include two key measures of student participation in distance learning: A) Participation in Teacher’s Office Hours, and B) completion of weekly assignments, to be marked as either “yes” or “no”. Students should be aware that these two elements of the Distance Learning Plan are recorded by teachers and may be factors in teachers’ “pass/no pass” grading. These represent minimum reporting requirements during the period of school closure, and teachers may maintain additional assessment information of their choosing that may inform a final “pass” or “no pass” grade.

Teachers should communicate to students what factors they will consider in assigning a final "pass/no pass" grade at the end of the semester.

Teachers are encouraged to offer students feedback on their work, and take additional steps to maintain students' motivation during the school closure period.

- (4) Physical Education: Under the current Shelter-in-Place directives, students' physical and mental well-being continues to be important, and many students will experience the negative effects of diminished opportunities for exercise, outdoor activity and fresh air, participation in cooperative sports, and education about nutrition and wellness. Physical Education teachers are encouraged to think creatively about assignments and demonstration of knowledge during the school closure period, and shall also issue "pass" and "no pass" grades to students during the school closure period.
- (5) Elective Courses: The same policy adjustments shall apply to all elective courses, and teachers are responsible for ensuring that students receive assignments during the school closure period and have access to elective teachers during the school closure period. BUSD recognizes that elective teachers' creativity will be necessary during this school closure period, and that many elective experiences depend a great deal on content-specific instructional spaces, group work, and other opportunities available only at school.
- (6) Notice to Families About Students Who May Not Pass a Class: This temporary adjustment in the district's grading policy does not waive sections of current policy and California Education Code that call for the timely notification of families when a student is at risk of failing a class. During the school closure period, these sections of BUSD policy shall be construed to mean "at risk of receiving a 'no pass' grade". This notification to families shall take place no later than Friday, May 15.
- (7) Grade Point Averages (GPA): All BUSD calculations of GPA shall exclude "pass" and "no pass" grades issued during the period of school closures.
- (8) Credit Recovery: Students who receive a "No Pass" grade for a course shall be required to repeat the course, and when possible the district will make available a free online option for earning credit for this class.

High School Graduation

No student shall be denied the opportunity to graduate from high school on the basis of his/her participation or lack of participation in distance learning activities during the COVID-19 school closure period. Additionally, any senior who is assigned a "no credit" mark for the second semester of the 2019-2020 school year and whose graduation status is jeopardized by this mark shall have the opportunity to submit a written

explanation of the circumstances that may have affected his/her participation this period. This written explanation shall be reviewed by both the teacher of the course and the school administrator.

Student Promotion and Retention

No student shall be retained on the basis of his/her participation or lack of participation in distance learning activities during the COVID-19 school closure period. Retention decisions should comply with procedures set forth by the BUSD Board of Education in the Student Parent Handbook (AR 5123), and must draw exclusively from information available to the teacher and the school's Student Study Team prior to the school closure period. Student Study Team members are advised to treat with caution any student retention decision that may be adversely impacted by a loss of learning during the COVID-19 school closure period.

References

- (1) BP 5121 Students, BUSD Parent Student Handbook

The teacher of each course shall determine the student's grade. The grade assigned by the teacher shall not be changed by the Board or the Superintendent except as provided by law, Board policy and administrative regulation. (Education Code 49066) Teachers shall evaluate a student's work in relation to standards which apply to all students at his/her grade level. The Superintendent or designee shall establish and regularly evaluate a uniform grading system, and principals shall ensure that student grades conform to this system. Teachers shall inform students and parents/guardians how student achievement will be evaluated in the classroom. Grades should be based on impartial, consistent observation of the quality of the student's work and his/her mastery of course content and objectives. Students shall have the opportunity to demonstrate this mastery through a variety of methods such as classroom participation, homework, tests and portfolios.

(<https://www.berkeleyschools.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Parent-Student-Handbook-2019-2020-Section-9.pdf>)

Grade Point Average (GPA)

The Superintendent or designee shall recommend to the Board the methodology to be used in calculating students' grade point averages.

Grades for achievement at the high school level shall be reported for each marking period as follows with the addition of plus/minus signs if appropriate:

At the K-8 level, teachers report each student's mastery of the standards in each subject each marking period.

Whenever it becomes evident to a teacher that a student is in danger of failing a course, the teacher shall arrange a conference with the student's parent/guardian or send the parent/guardian a written report. (Education Code 49067)

Progress reports that indicate a grade range (A/B, B/C, C/D, or D/F) in each high school course or numeric ratings for each middle school course shall be mailed to parents of all secondary students at the midpoint of each marking period.

An Incomplete is given only when a student's work is not finished because of illness or other excused absence. If not made up within six weeks, the Incomplete in any high school subject shall become an F.

(2) BUSD Student Parent Handbook, Promotion/Acceleration/Retention

General Criteria for Retention: The minimum criteria that will be used to identify all students who are at-risk of retention or who shall be retained include a composite score of multiple assessment measures. The minimum assessments that shall be used for identification are:

- Annual district wide multiple assessments that measure mastery of instructional standards at the student's grade level.
- Grades/Rubrics
- Assessment results on standardized testing (SAT-9 in total reading and mathematics)
- Social Emotional factors listed below Elementary:

The decision to retain shall be made by the classroom teacher based upon the student's grades and District-adopted indicators of achievement. A student with no elementary retention history who has not met the minimum criteria for assignment to the next grade shall be retained unless the student's regular classroom teacher, after considering additional non-academic factors that can contribute to a successful retention, determines, in writing, that repeating the grade is not the appropriate intervention for the student's academic deficiencies. Factors to be considered must include:

- Academic success in reading, mathematics, or other academic areas
- Student attitude about retention
- Parent support for retention
- Chronological age
- Maturity

- Physical size
- Social adjustment
- Ability level
- Availability of alternative programs
- Previous/possible interventions

This determination shall specify the reasons that retention is, or is not appropriate for the student and shall include recommendations for interventions that are necessary to assist the student in attaining acceptable levels of academic achievement. If the teacher's recommendation for assignment is contingent on the student's participation in Mandatory Summer School or an interim session remediation program, the student's academic performance shall be reassessed at the end of the remediation program, and the decision to retain or assign the student shall be reevaluated at that time. The parents/guardians and the home school principal shall meet before any final determination of retention is made.

If a decision to retain is made, the classroom teacher shall put it in writing on the final report of the student and an Individual Retention Plan shall be developed. Such plan should include an evaluation of the student's needs as well as recommended strategies to help him/her reach specific academic goals.

Middle School: A sixth, seventh or eighth grade student in a middle school who has earned at least 10 out of 12 or 12 out of 14 credits per year, met State, District, and teacher's standards, and passed all English and mathematics courses with a C or better shall be promoted. Any student who receives a D in English and/or mathematics will be strongly recommended to attend an Intensive Instructional Support Program and/or Mandatory Summer School.

Any student who receives a D in Algebra or a higher level mathematics course must repeat the course and earn a C or higher in order to advance to the next level. Any student not enrolled in a six-period day will have specific course completion requirements identified by the Student Study Team and approved by the Principal. Any student receiving an F in English and/or mathematics is considered failing the course and will be assigned to an Intensive Instructional Support Program, including but not limited to Mandatory Summer School.

A student receiving an F in an English or mathematics course may receive credit in the course by scoring a "Proficient" or higher rating on the California Standards Test in English (grades 6, 7, 8) or mathematics (grades 6, 7, 8). If credit is earned through one of these tests, the failing in the course will remain on the transcript. There will be a notation on the transcript of a pass grade for the English/mathematics examination.

2. Timeline for Notification of Being at Risk of Retention: When a pupil is identified as being at risk of retention, a parent shall be notified as early in the school year as possible. Initial notification will take place no later than at the completion of the first full grade cycle the student attends, at which time an individualized intervention plan will be developed with the parent/guardian. Second notification will take place at the completion of the second full grading cycle. Third notification along with recommendations for Mandatory Summer School and fall placement will take place in April. At any time during this process a parent/guardian can request a conference with his/her child's teacher, or request a Student Study Team.

(3) California Education Code on Grading

49066.

(a) When grades are given for any course of instruction taught in a school district, the grade given to each pupil shall be the grade determined by the teacher of the course and the determination of the pupil's grade by the teacher, in the absence of clerical or mechanical mistake, fraud, bad faith, or incompetency, shall be final.

(b) The governing board of the school district and the superintendent of such district shall not order a pupil's grade to be changed unless the teacher who determined such grade is, to the extent practicable, given an opportunity to state orally, in writing, or both, the reasons for which such grade was given and is, to the extent practicable, included in all discussions relating to the changing of such grade. (Downloaded on 04.01.20 from

http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=EDC§ionNum=49066.)

Additional References on College Admissions and Athletic Eligibility During COVID-19 School Closures

(4) California State University, April 1, 2020

The CSU will accept grades of "Credit" or "Pass" to satisfy "a-g" requirements completed during winter, spring or summer 2020 terms. All prior coursework must be graded and a grade of C- or better must be earned for the course to satisfy "a-g" requirements. Grades of credit/pass or no credit/non-passing will not be included in the calculation of high school GPA.

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1iT62C7pjDQQ_n0G3DfzuWppByAl5NP6-

(5) University of California, April 1, 2020

Suspended the letter grade requirement for A-G courses completed in winter/spring/summer 2020 for all students, including UC's most recently admitted freshmen.

<https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/press-room/uc-eases-admissions-requirements-help-students-families-wake-covid-19>

- (6) Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU), April 1, 2020

[AICCU Institution Activities to Serve High School Juniors and Seniors\(PDF\)](#)