

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Terrell County Board of Education

FROM: Douglas Bell, Superintendent

SUBJECT: Temporary Revisions of Policies Related to Grading, Promotion and Retention

DATE: April 20, 2020

BACKGROUND: Due to unprecedented challenges around the world, the United States and in Georgia due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Georgia Department of Education has provided maximum flexibility to districts to allow them to focus on the safety and health of their students and staff during this time.

State Superintendent, Richard Woods, suspended state-mandated testing, teacher/leader evaluation and reporting requirements, and attendance reporting and requirements; secured approval of assessment and accountability waivers from the U.S. Department of Education; recommended a package of waivers for approval by the State Board of Education (SBOE) to support school districts as they navigate the impacts of school closures and impending openings; and worked with Governor Kemp to obtain an Executive Order for the suspension of state laws that could not be waived by the SBOE.

The approved waivers pertaining to grading, promotion, and retention are:

- **Awarding Units of Credit and Acceptance of Transfer Credits/Grades: O.C.G.A. §20-2- 159.3; O.C.G.A. §20-2-159.4 (c); SBOE Rule 160-5-1-.15(2)(d)(3) and (4), and (2)(h)**
Flexibility will allow districts greater ability to award credit based on district determination of student competency.
- **Graduation Requirements and Seat Time: SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.48(6)(i)**
Flexibility will allow districts to award credit for course completion upon mastery of course standards at any time during the semester and waive the clock hour requirements for students to earn a Carnegie Unit of credit during the regular school year and for summer schools. Flexibility will also allow for the substitution of equivalent or higher-level requirements.
- **Promotion and Retention: O.C.G.A. §§ 20-2-283, 20-2-284; SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.11**
Flexibility will allow districts to waive, modify, or set promotion/retention criteria, as well as protocols for making placement decisions in a timely manner.
- **Statewide Passing Score: SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.13(2)(d) and (f)**
Flexibility waives the requirement that the Georgia Milestones End-of-Course (EOC) assessment shall be used as the final exam in the courses assessed by a Georgia Milestones EOC and waives the requirement that the numeric score on the Georgia Milestones EOC shall count for 20% of the student's final numeric grade in the course assessed by the Georgia Milestones EOC.
- **Student Assessments: O.C.G.A. §20-2-281; SBOE Rule 160-3-1-.07**
Flexibility will waive the administration of, and related requirements for, state assessments scheduled for late Spring 2020 administration.

Proposal: In developing the temporary revisions to the grading, promotion and retention policies, TCSS leadership attempted to strike a delicate balance between academic accountability and the need to be sensitive to the challenges faced by faculty, staff, students and their families. To that end, this proposal has two basic tenets: (1) ensure that students are not penalized for circumstances over which they had no control, and (2) ensure that students are not held back in their expected progression as a result of the COVID-19 school closures.

In alignment with the tenets established above and the flexibility provided by state officials, and with acknowledgement that the vast majority (if not all) standards should have been introduced/taught to students during the first 27 weeks of school, the proposed changes are recommended in regards to current grading, retention and promotion policies for the 2019-2020 school year:

- Calculate final grades and award credits based on the 27-week average for students who have demonstrated minimum proficiency, as indicated by a grade of 70 or higher. For courses beginning 3rd nine weeks, credit will be awarded based upon 3rd nine-week grade for the course.
- Students who have demonstrated minimum proficiency, as indicated by a grade of 70 or higher, as of the end of third term may opt to accept this grade as their final grade or complete assignments to improve their grade(s).
- Students who have not demonstrated minimum proficiency, as indicated by a grade of 70 or higher, as of the end of third term must complete assignments to reach minimum efficiency or receive a failing grade and not receive credit for the course(s).
- Calculate final grades and award credits based on the 36-week average for students who submit assignments during the 4th Term (March 16th - May 20th).
- No local assessments shall be administered for the 4th Term (March 16th - May 20th).
- Implement a “no zero” policy for the 4th Term (March 16th - May 20th). Any work accepted will only have a positive impact on a student’s grade(s).
- Award grade equivalent of P/F to students in K-8 (unless taking a high school course in middle school).
- Waive EOC/EOG and/or any grade or course-level final or nine-week exam.
- Remove the 20% weight from grading calculations for final and EOC.
- Use school/teacher recommendations for “administrative placement” of students who fail to meet minimum proficiency. At a minimum the following should be considered:
 - student has personalized interventions planned or already in place (IEP, Tier 2 or 3, EL, etc.)
 - student has exhibited growth in prior years or current year’s assessments, grades, and formative school-based measures
- High school seniors must still satisfy the approved 23-credit requirement for graduation.
- High school seniors who need credit recovery or grade repair, or who are at-risk after 27-week averages are calculated shall be allowed to complete assignments by submitting assignments directly to teachers through May 20th.

Recommendation: That the Board of Education approves the proposed temporary revisions to *Policy IHE – Promotion, Placement and Retention*, and other relevant policies related to grading, promotion and retention for the 2019-2020 school year.