

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT
JANUARY 19, 2012

GUEST – A few years ago the graduation policy was revised to address home school and foreign exchange students participating in the graduation ceremony. Walking across the graduation stage was restricted to students receiving an Epping High School diploma. (Seniors not having adequate credits to graduate are also not permitted to participate in the graduation ceremony.) It is also important to note that home school students take their core classes at home and are permitted to take non-core classes and participate in extracurricular activities. Foreign exchange students are required to take a full core load and are expected to maintain passing grades.

POLICY IKF - PARTICIPATION IN GRADUATION EVENTS – Only students receiving a high school diploma from Epping High School may participate in the high school graduation ceremony and associated events. Exceptions may be made for home school students to attend a graduation event if the home school student is to receive special recognition for a co-curricular and/or extracurricular program. Foreign exchange students may attend graduation events if a member of the senior class. These exceptions do not include home school or foreign exchange students participating in the high school graduation ceremony and walking across the graduation stage to receive a diploma. (See email attachment)

DISTRICT GRADING, REPORTING, & RECOGNITION SYSTEMS GUIDELINES – In June the School Board approved the *ESD 21st Century Learning Expectations* as required by the Special Report for NEASC accreditation. During the development of these expectations it was decided to align all three schools as the NEASC Standards were good practice that all schools needed to follow. These expectations were designed to include content concept and skill performance standards with the concepts aligned to state standards and the skills aligned to the *Framework for 21st Century Learning.*” In doing so the ESD Expectations met the revised NEASC and NHDOE Standards. These expectations were also integrated into the EHS curriculum format also required for NEASC accreditation resulting in a fully aligned system.

While working with the ESD Expectations this school year, it became evident that the use of “learning expectations” which is a NEASC term was confusing when talking about “competencies” as required by the NHDOE Standards. In application both of these terms were essentially performance standards. As a result the ESD Expectations, which included content competencies, were renamed *ESD Competencies for Learning* to avoid further confusion. As District Curriculum Committees have worked with the Competencies for Learning some minor changes have been made.

The next Special Report for NEASC accreditation is due April 1st. The expectation is that EHS will have a report card that communicates student progress on the *ESD Competencies for Learning*. This new reporting system is also a requirement for the revised Public School Standards in which high school credit is awarded by student mastery of competencies, not by the traditional method of receiving a passing grade. In preparation for the Special Report the EHS Principal Kyle Repucci and I have been

coordinating our efforts to develop *EHS and ESD Grading and Reporting Guidelines* in support of and in alignment with each other. This process has involved conducting research on best grading and reporting practice, reviewing samples of other high school reports and guidelines, and sharing our work with the District Leadership Team and EHS Teachers for comment. This work led to a discussion on what is competent as competency is the foundation on which EHS must award course credit. You will note that the *ESD Competencies for Learning* have been revised to articulate a student's performance level based on the definition of competency that came out of this work.

- Advanced – understands key concepts and skills and applies with consistency and independence
- Beyond Competent – understands key concepts and skills and applies with consistency and effectiveness
- Competent – understands key concepts and skills and is working on applying concepts and skills
- Not Yet Competent – does not yet understand key concepts and skills and is working toward this goal

All of this work on *ESD Competencies for Learning* has been incorporated into the draft EHS Report Card.

Recognizing that grading, reporting, and recognition systems are interrelated, our work also included the development of guidelines to govern these practices based on educational research. The District Guidelines are as follows.

1. *Recognize product, process, and progress criteria play a role in reporting student learning.* This guideline sets the foundation for all other guidelines. It recognizes that the learning product represents what students know and are able to do; the learning process affects the learning product, but does not show what students know and are able to do; the learning progress is different for all students as they start the learning process in different places.
2. *Separate academic achievement from effort and behaviors.* This guideline recognizes that academic achievement is mastery of the content while effort and behaviors are the process used by students to learn the content. By incorporating effort and behaviors in the academic grade, the overall grade does not fully represent what a student knows and is able to do. Although it is understood that effort and behaviors affect learning, incorporating these non-academic factors in the overall grade inflate the grade and mask learning issues.
3. *Define and relate grades to content concept and skills performance standards.* This guideline recognizes that grades are based on a student's mastery of learning standards which are embedded in the District's curriculum and aligned to state standards. The NH system groups grades K to 8 and 9 to 12 and consistent practices within these grade groupings are essential to transitions from grade to grade.
4. *Base grades on a body of evidence of student work from multiple assessments.* This guideline recognizes that students need multiple opportunities and various different ways in order to demonstrate their learning as not all students learn the same way and at the same rate.

5. *Use quality assessments.* This guideline recognizes the importance of assessments in evaluating student performance. The assessment must evaluate the learning goal that was taught. This guideline also requires assessments to evaluate learning at different levels in order to fully determine the learning level a student is performing.
6. *Use sound educational practices and professional judgment.* Consistency from classroom to classroom, within schools, and across the District is imperative to fully understand a student's progress. This guideline addresses the issue of different grading and assessment practices. It also recognizes that assessments come in two categories; those that evaluate learning during the learning process and those that evaluate actual learning at the conclusion of the learning period. It requires that the actual learning be the primary component of a student's grade and that students be given ample opportunity to demonstrate their learning. It also requires students to do the work and provides guidelines for late work, extra credit, and reassessments to encourage student learning.
7. *Validate student grades to state and national assessment benchmarks for the student's grade/course level.* This guideline requires correlation of grades and recognition systems to benchmarks in order to guard against grade inflation and provide a true representation of student learning level.
8. *Use an inclusive model for grading, reporting, and recognizing special education students.* This guideline recognizes that special education students may receive accommodations and/or modifications. Accommodations do not change the performance standards, but modifications do. In cases of modifications the reporting system must report that student progress is being reported using different performance standards.
9. *Award high school credit based on meeting course and district competencies.* This guideline recognizes the changes in awarding high school credit per the revised Public School Standards. It requires units of study to include course and district competencies, assessments to determine the level of competency, credit to be awarded on achieving competence for all content concept competencies, and a response to intervention based on competency completion. It also sets competency at 70% for each content concept competency. The decision to increase the grade for competency from that of the traditional grading system is twofold. Competent has been defined as understanding key concepts and skills and working toward application. The elimination of excessive grading penalties and the opportunities for reassessment with student initiative will also impact grades.
10. *Communicate grading, reporting, and recognition systems to students, parents, and other parties.* This guideline requires that students and parents know how grades are calculated and that teachers use technology to report student progress.

It is important to note that these guidelines will provide consistency in classrooms across the District, implement best educational practices per research, meet the NH Public School Standards, and meet the

requirements for NEASC accreditation. It is without question that these guidelines include some significant changes. However, in talking with teachers some of them are already implementing some of these guidelines. For example, some teachers already offer reassessments. In talking with students it is always about fairness and these guidelines will provide a consistent and fair learning culture for all students.

It is also important to note that some things will not change.

- Students will receive student progress reports.
- EHS graduates will receive a transcript.
- Students will still receive an overall grade.
- Effort and attendance will be reported.
- Schools will celebrate learning with an honor roll.
- High school students will have a GPA.
- EHS will celebrate the top ten seniors and select a valedictorian and salutatorian.
- Individual Education Plans will continue to be implemented.

At this time the focus is on the high school due to the April 1st deadline. The goal is to have School Board approval of the concept prior to this deadline.

(See email attachment)

SCHOOL CALENDAR 2012-2013 – We are a bit behind on the school calendar as SAU 16 has just recently approved their calendar. The District Leadership Team is recommending a similar calendar again next school year due to continue implementation of the math program in EES and EMS and assessment work in EMS and EHS. The calendar includes 175 student days and 188 teacher days. PD days were aligned with Deerfield Fair, Presidential Election, Civil Rights Day, and Town Voting. Conference days were placed on Wednesday with the fall conference day delayed until early December due to the impact of state testing. Epping vacations also align with SST vacations.

The calendar has also been distributed to the EEA for their feedback. Due to a recent change in law, calendars shorter than 180 student days do not require the approval of the NH Commissioner as long as the criteria for instructional, professional development, and emergency closing hours is met. (To be distributed by Paula via email)

BLIZZARD BAGS – The Kearsarge District worked with the NH Department of Education on the implementation of blizzard bags. Since then the NHDOE released the following guidelines.

- Plan must be approved by the Commissioner of Education.
- Days used to pilot the program may not be counted as school days.
- Use is intended for days when school is closed unexpectedly and not for scheduled closings such as professional development days.
- Plan may not be used to make up days when school was scheduled to be closed.
- Teachers must be available and must participate on blizzard days.

- An interactive internet process with supplemental paper materials for students that do not have internet access is the expectation. Blizzard bags are not just homework.

In talking with Kearsarge the following information was attained.

- 2 PD days were required to develop instruction and assessment materials that were rigorous and aligned to state standards.
- 80% of students were required to participate or the day did not count.
- Teachers had to commit to being online and accessible during the school day.
- There were computer access issues with families with more than one student.
- Blizzard bags are challenging for high school.
- Power outages cannot be used for blizzard bags.
- Mixed reviews were received from parents.

After reviewing all this information the District Leadership Team recommended that the District not use blizzard bags next school year, but may consider it in the future.

FINANCIAL – DELIBERATIVE SESSION – The draft presentation for deliberative session has been distributed for comment. It includes student highlights and information on Teachers’ Agreement, proposed budget, and the petition warrant article. Presentation has been updated to include the Budget Committee’s votes to recommend/not recommend. We will need to determine who will be presenting the various articles. (See email attachment)

POLICY – THIRD READING/APPROVAL – The following policies have been recommended for athletics. No changes were made from last meeting.

- Policy GEA – Athletic Team Coaches is a new policy governing District practice on selecting, compensating, and continuing athletic coaches. This policy was recommended by the NH School Boards Association and revised/approved by School Principal and Athletic Director. Revised to expand upon experience to include non-school setting with student team sports.
- Policy JLCJ – Concussions and Head Injuries is a new policy governing District practice on concussions and head injuries. This is an area of serious concern as more information on the ramifications of head injuries on health and education are known. The NH Department of Education, NH School Boards Association, NH Interscholastic Athletic Association, and Epping School Administration are recommending that students participating in competitive athletic activities have a baseline concussion test for eligibility. The policy addresses various administrative responsibilities, protocol for eligibility to play, protocol for return to play, concussion awareness and training, and academic issues in concussed student.
- Policy JLCA – Physical Examinations of Students has been revised to reflect recommended Policy JLCJ above.

POLICY – IKA – GRADING, REPORTING, & RECOGNITION SYSTEM – DISTRIBUTION – Policy IKA is recommended for revision due to an oversight. The policy should address grading, reporting, and recognition systems as they are all interconnected. There is no change in intent other than to include reporting with grading and recognitions. (See email attachment)

OUTSTANDING ITEMS

- Emergency shelter – January emergency management meeting was cancelled due to weather and is to be rescheduled.
- Review of annual policy – Review is scheduled for after school board elections.
- EHS gym broadcasting – Approved by School Board. Status of ETV equipment to be determined.
- Emergency generator bids – On hold pending emergency shelter decision above.
- Natural gas advocacy – Responsibility and deadline to be determined.

NONPUBLIC –

- Student bullying report

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