

MEMORANDUM

July 10, 2020

TO: The Honorable Chair and Members of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida

FROM: Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools 

SUBJECT: STAFF FOLLOW-UP: SCHOOL BOARD MEETING OF MAY 20, 2020, AGENDA ITEM H-10, ACADEMIC SAFETY NET FOR STUDENTS DURING THE PANDEMIC

At the School Board meeting of May 20, 2020, the School Board approved Agenda Item H-10, proffered by School Board Member Dr. Martin Karp and co-sponsored unanimously. This item requested that the Superintendent consider a plan for the final marking period pertaining to academic performance, which would account for student stress levels, learning environments, and obligations.

We recognize that some students face challenges throughout their educational careers that are beyond their control. The conditions brought about by COVID-19 undoubtedly exacerbated some of these challenges, particularly since school closures limited students' ability to access learning tools, instruction, technology, and wraparound supports that are typically available in a brick-and-mortar setting. Unmitigated, these challenges have the potential to impact student academic performance and grades, which in turn impact retention and promotion, access to competitive post-secondary opportunities, and scholarship awards.

For these reasons, District staff created the grading guidance document titled "Recommended Grading Procedures For 2019-2020 Quarter 4 and Final Grades." Our efforts with this guidance document are to address, as best we can, the variability in access and inherent biases in grading. This is the best possible way to protect our students from harm and honor their hard work under extremely difficult circumstances while not penalizing anyone for factors outside their control.

The following principles guided the development of the document and reflect our continuous commitment to advancing equity:

- Ensure that the negative impact of the school closures on students is minimized;
- Keep students engaged in learning;
- Engage families as partners in supporting their children;
- Meet the state's requirement to make a good faith effort in providing meaningful high school credit-bearing opportunities; and
- Promote common expectations across all schools.

While teachers have autonomy in assigning grades, this document recommends that sensitivity be used when issuing grades because students are facing serious issues regarding lack of connectivity at home, no in-person support, sharing of devices with

siblings or working parents, and social/emotional concerns. Understanding that teachers made every effort to ensure students successfully completed the fourth quarter, students will be permitted to make up any assignments missed throughout the grading period. This opportunity will extend through the Securing Opportunities for Academic Recovery (SOAR) Summer Program and the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year.

Preliminary final grade distributions for the 2019-2020 school year are consistent with the final grades for the 2018-2019 school year. It is expected that Quarter 4 grades will continue to improve throughout the summer and will also have a positive impact on the 2019-2020 final grade distributions.

We will continue to address the needs of our students, keeping in mind their stress levels, learning environments, and obligations, as we navigate this unprecedented time together.

If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Marie Izquierdo, Chief Academic Officer, Office of Academics and Transformation, at 305 995-1451.

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cc: School Board Attorney
Superintendent's Cabinet
Ms. Lisette M. Alves
School Board Agenda Office