

Email Synopsis of recent SBE decisions from Chief Academic Officer, Rebecca Garland, to Instructional Leaders across the State

Instructional Leaders:

Below please find some information from the June State Board of Education meeting that you may find useful and informative.

High School Transcript and Grading

As all LEAs across the State “rolled” onto NC WISE, our technology folks discovered that we had variations from State Board policy in relation to grading and data entry into the Student Information System. NC statutes and State Board policy require a standard transcript. The following modifications have been made by the Board or will be required of the LEAs in order for all 115 school systems to be in compliance.

- **Grading Scales:**

The SBE adopted a new policy in June that should bring all LEAs into compliance. The policy basically allows LEAs to determine if they prefer an augmented scale (variations in grade points within grade letter ranges, i.e. 3.267, 2.345, 1.443) or a standard scale (set grade points for a range, i.e. 4, 3, 2, 1, 0). After that decision is made, LEAs may choose to enter the numeric grade (93, 72, etc.) or the letter grade (A, B, C, or A-, B+, etc.). By amending their policy, the SBE should have brought all 115 LEAs into compliance. The basic philosophy of the grading scale is 93-100 (A), 85-92 (B), 77-84 (C), and 70-76 (D). If an LEA is using a 10-point scale or any scale other than the ones referenced in the policy (attached), then the LEA must adopt one of the options approved by the SBE to be in compliance with State statutes and SBE policy.

During the next academic year the SBE will convene a study group with representatives from across the state to consider adopting one standard grading scale for the State. More information on this group will be forthcoming in the fall.

- **Grades vs. Weight**

The weighting policy that is in effect for all students has been approved by the University of North Carolina System and the NC Community College System (with sign-off by the Independent Colleges). The SBE does not have unilateral authority to change the weighting policy. The policy requires 6 quality points for AP/IB and selected college courses and 5 quality points for Honors and some college courses that are approved by the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement. Over the past few years some school systems have adopted local policies that violate the weighting requirements. In order to encourage students to take AP exams, many school systems change the student’s course registration from AP to honors and grant 5 quality points for an A (and so on down the scale) if the student does not take the AP exam. This practice is a clear violation of the policy and supersedes local authority.

State statute does, however, grant grading authority to the local principal. If LEAs want to attach a penalty if a student does not take the AP exam, the penalty should

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occur when the teacher assigns the final grade to the student. The LEA may adopt a policy to lower the student's classroom grade which will, in effect, lower the GPA to the same level as if the weight had been changed. Example: A student earns an A in AP English and does not take the exam. The grade would be lowered to a B which would equal 5 quality points. If the local school system had changed the AP English course to an Honors course, the A would equal 5 quality points. The outcome is the same, and lowering the quality points by this method doesn't violate state policy.

Please work with your superintendents to make these changes in local policy. It is true that a local system may add to a state policy, but local systems may not violate a state policy in creating their own policies. Not even the State Board can modify the weighting policy without agreement from the higher education entities in the state.

Calculation of Valedictorian and Salutatorian

There is no state policy on valedictorian and salutatorian, but there are clear policies on transcripts. Transcripts of students who may be transferring to a high school **may not be altered** in order to "standardize" the calculations for class rank. For example, a student transferring in had an opportunity to take more AP courses than students in the school; therefore, someone changes the student's transcript so that the student doesn't impact class rank of students who were already enrolled at the school. Under no circumstances should a student's transcript be changed once the courses have been entered unless there was an error in the entry. The transcript may not be changed to accommodate calculation of class rank. This practice is a clear ethics violation. If schools want to "standardize" the field for class rank, the calculations will have to be made in an alternative way that doesn't require a change in the transcript.

• Credit Recovery

Credit recovery is defined as earning credit for a course initially failed, either through partial modular remediation or taking the full course over again. The decision as to which form of credit recovery a student should use is most appropriately made at the school level. For transcript purposes, both the failed course grade and the recovered grade should be entered onto the transcript, and both will be included in GPA calculation. A student retakes the EOC **only** in cases where the student failed the EOC when taking the initial course. The student **does not have to retake** the EOC, even if they retake the course. NC WISE staff will be working with your data entry folks to determine coding procedures for modular/partial recovery courses and a method for bypassing the unnecessary retake of the EOC. LEA testing coordinators and NC WISE coordinators will communicate information on how accountability flags (codes) will identify students so that when a course is failed, but the EOC is passed, the student will not be required to retake the EOC when recovering credit.

Additional Transcript Changes

NC WISE staff will be making additional changes to student transcripts. Much of the information that once appeared on the transcript will be entered into an internal student

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record. The changes that you will see are a result of new federal regulations surrounding HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) and FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act). Again, NC WISE staff will be working with your local data entry folks to explain these changes in detail.

The Graduation Project

Session Law 2009-60, ratified in June, prevents any student from being required to work on the graduation project as a state requirement for graduation until July 2011. The legislation authorizes a study of the project – the results of which are to be shared with the General Assembly by July 2010. Since the philosophy of the Graduation Project specifies a four-year experience, the project as a requirement has been delayed until at least the graduating class of 2015. The State Board will be reviewing the status of the project over the next few months, and you will be receiving further information during the fall. Local boards of education are strongly encouraged to continue the project as a local graduation requirement. The SBE continues to hear from university partners as well as business and industry that the project is the best assessment in the state's assessment portfolio.

Miscellaneous Actions

The following actions were taken. Detailed information on each item will be shared by the division indicated.

High School Credit for Middle School Students. Students may now take and receive credit for **high school social studies** courses taken while students are in middle school. Prior to this action, middle school students were able to take and receive credit for high school mathematics, science, and second language. The SBE has directed DPI staff to bring a comprehensive policy in the fall that will allow middle school students to get credit for any high school courses taken while in middle school. (Curriculum – Dr. Cindy Williamson)

Construction Education Programs Certification and Credentials. Teachers should complete certification for NCCER by August 1, 2010. Programs are to be certified by August 1, 2011. (Career Technical Education – Rebecca Payne)

Reminder:

A draft of the **essential standards** in Mathematics, Science, 10th grade ELA, Occupational Course of Study and Information and Technology Skills are on the NC Public Schools webpage for review. Please remember to complete the LEA structured review of the standards. (Curriculum – Dr. Cindy Williamson)

Finally:

Thanks to everyone who participated in the **Instructional Leaders Webinar**. We have received some extremely positive feedback and some good suggestions for making the

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next meeting even more productive. We will be identifying individuals to serve on the Curriculum Advisory group and hope to have our first meeting at the end of July.

We know you are winding down the year which will long be remembered as the most stressful one for all of us involved in public education across the state. As you move into summer planning, please know that we are here to help in any way we can. Let us hear from you if you need assistance.

Best wishes,
Rebecca, Angela and the directors in Academic Services