



SANTA MONICA - MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

May 8, 2020

Superintendent's Message: Grading for Spring 2020

Dear Parents, Guardians and Staff,

We started 2020 with so much promise and enthusiasm with our students who were thriving academically and socio-emotionally. Our teachers were gearing up for state testing and assessments in the spring, and beginning to plan for the home stretch of the 2019-20 school year. Safer at home orders went into effect due to the coronavirus pandemic. After the last day of in-person instruction on March 12th, our schools transitioned to the distance learning model.

This year, the in-person aspect of that growth was impacted in a way no one could have imagined. Students and families have demonstrated flexibility and perseverance during this unprecedented time. Our teachers have worked hard to adapt to teaching remotely and seek to stay connected to all students and families in this challenging time.

Due to the school closures, teachers have not been able to observe students operating in the classroom at their independent levels nor administer year-end assessments. While your child's hard work, academic and social growth are celebrated, we felt it is critical for us to take an in-depth look at our grading policy and how to best adapt to the current reality.

I have spoken with other district superintendents and our educational services team, led by Dr. Jacqueline Mora, has consulted with school administrators, teachers, counselors and student groups, to devise what we believe to be the most appropriate grading policy for the remainder of this school year. We have engaged our school board members in this discussion.

Our board of education adopted a [grading resolution](#) at its May 7, 2020 meeting that addresses grading for all grade levels, during this semester, as follows:

Elementary school: Transitional kindergarten – 5th grade

For elementary students, the policy states that teachers will provide ongoing feedback to students and families that will culminate with a written narrative that reflects student performance over the course of the year, including progress made during distance learning. The narrative will be a holistic assessment of student learning and progress that will identify areas of strength and provide feedback for areas of growth that includes suggestions for next steps.

Middle school: 6th – 8th grade

Teachers will assign "Credit" (CR) or "No Credit" (NC) and will provide ongoing feedback on assignments and student work to students and families on progress during grading period 6. The "Credit" (CR) or No Credit (NC) grade will not be calculated in the grade point average (GPA). Students are expected to participate during distance learning to the extent their circumstances allow. Students who participate in distance learning and earned a passing grade



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of A, B, C, or D during grading period 5 will be issued a “Credit” (CR) for the semester grade. Students who do not participate in distance learning may earn an incomplete (I). Students who were not passing at grading period 5 may improve their grade for grading period 6 and the semester to a “Credit” by demonstrating progress toward mastery of essential standards as determined by their teacher. If students who were not passing at grading period 5 do not demonstrate growth during the distance learning period, a grade of “No Credit” may be issued, at the teacher’s discretion.

High School: 9th – 12th grade

Teachers will assign letter grades based on performance on assignments due on March 13, 2020. These grades will be referred to as the “baseline.” Teachers will issue grades for the semester that are the same as the letter grade issued for the baseline. Teachers will also issue final grades that are higher than the grades issued for the baseline if evidence of sufficient gains in student learning and progress is apparent from the work completed during distance learning. Students in grades 9 through 12 shall also have the option to take a Credit (CR) or No Credit (NC) grade, instead of a letter grade, for any course(s) for the second semester 2020.

Students in 12th grade must select this option on or before June 5, 2020. Students in grades 9 through 11 must select this option on or before June 10, 2020. If the CR or NC option is not selected by the aforementioned dates, the second semester grade will default to a letter grade. Credit (CR) or No Credit (NC) grades shall not be calculated in the grade point average (GPA).

Students who earned a grade of A, B, C, or D for the baseline will be issued a “Credit” (CR) for the semester grade. Students who earned a grade of F for the baseline will be issued a “No Credit” (NC) for the semester grade. Students may improve their grade of “No Credit” (NC) for the semester to a “Credit” (CR) if evidence of sufficient gains in student learning and progress is apparent from the work completed during distance learning.

Teachers will continue to provide assignments throughout the distance learning period. These assignments and grades will be entered into the Illuminate grade book to provide students and parents with a snapshot of course grades. Teachers are encouraged to provide ongoing feedback on assignments and student work to students and families on progress during distance learning.

Special education

Students with IEPs, will receive a report card from their primary teacher(s). Their IEP progress report, which will review progress toward their IEP goals, will be sent home at the same time. High school students who are working toward a High School Diploma will be provided a letter grade or can opt into the Credit or No Credit Option by the dates, as mentioned above. High School students who are working toward a Certificate of Completion will automatically receive Credit or No Credit.



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All students

Students should make every effort to use any means available to them to remain engaged each day. Students and parents are encouraged to monitor engagement and academic progress by checking the Illuminate Parent Portal or other platforms utilized by the school regularly for information on assignments and grades.

We recognize the challenge that distance learning presents to many families and our school board feels this is the most equitable method to measure student progress this year. Every effort will be made by school staff to connect with students and families to support their well-being and academic success during the distance learning period.

Working Groups

We are currently working with elementary and middle school working groups to provide greater guidance to our teachers and families on the implementation of our evaluation and grading policy. Our high school working group will convene next week to outline the process by which students and families may select the credit/no credit option. These guidelines will be shared with families as soon as possible. We appreciate your patience.

Distance learning support

To support your students' distance learning, please click on the Distance Learning button on your school website. Devices continue to be available. Please contact your school site to arrange.

Closing thoughts

My next message will describe our summer school plans in detail, and provide more information on our expectation to resume school on our planned first day, August 20, 2020. We are discussing what form this may take and looking to guidance by state, health and education officials, for what is best for health and safety of students and staff. We have no intention of beginning school any sooner than our approved [calendar](#) date.

Please note that all Child Development Services programs and camps will be closed during summer, including preschool, school age programs and the Infant Toddler Center (ITC).

Thank you for your resilience. We understand that many are in uncertain circumstances and want to assure you that we are here to help and partner with each of you as we look to the future where our schools and classrooms again welcome students.

Best wishes for a Happy Mother's Day to all staff and parents!

Sincerely,

Dr. Ben Drati, Superintendent