

Q & A

Response to BVEA by Judy Skupa

Why did we adopt this system? Was something deemed inadequate about the previous system?

In 2002, the district Curriculum Coordinating Council canvassed multiple groups across the district asking for the answer to the question, *What relationship is there, if any, between a grade and attainment of standards?* School Improvement Teams, District Accountability Committee, Content Area Curriculum Councils, Elementary Schools, Secondary Schools, Principals, Assistant Principals, PTOs, PTAs, District Parent Council, and the Multi-Ethnic Action Coalition gave a strong consensus that there should indeed be a relationship between a student's grade in a course and the attainment of standards. Two design teams, Elementary and Secondary, comprised of parents, teachers, and administrators were charged with the responsibility of designing a grading and reporting system for their level where a student's grade reflected the attainment of standards, benchmarks, and essential learning results for all content areas.

At the elementary level, the design team created a report card that consisted of essential learning results for all content areas at each grade level. Teachers use a scale of 1-4, basic to advanced achievement, to communicate student achievement of the standard. Additionally, student progress is rated for each content area using *E, V, S, I*. Elementary schools may elect to begin using letter grades at grade 4.

The first iteration of the secondary system required teachers to assign a grade for every standard, every reporting period, every student. The first design was abandoned because it was unmanageable. The secondary design team continued to research other districts across the nation and finally proposed a system that met the intent of the policy while at the same time was manageable for secondary teachers. Current procedures reflect this design using a single letter grade to report the attainment of standards, benchmarks and essential learning results. All grades are placed into three grading categories: **Formative Assessment, Summative Assessment, and Preparation and Production**. A minimum of 75% of a student's grade at the high school and 70% of the student's grade at the middle school will come from the **Formative and Summative Assessment** categories (reflecting what a student should know, do, and understand). Assignments in the **Preparation and Production** categories (the nonacademic factors including homework for practice, participation, effort) constitute the remaining percentage of a student's grade. Guidelines based on best practices of a grading and reporting system that is supportive of standards including reteach/relearn/reassess, late work, homework, equitable grading scales, and extra credit are also addressed in the design team training.

The shift in policy and procedures was deemed necessary so that our grading and reporting system was aligned with curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Without doubt, no other issue in the standards reform movement has caused more discussion than issues related to grading and reporting in districts across the nation. Despite a growing body of knowledge of what works

and does not work, grading policies and practices in many secondary schools have remained basically unchanged for decades. The Boulder Valley secondary grading design team, like many of their counterparts across the nation (including Montgomery County Public Schools and Littleton) decided to tackle these issues head-on because of their belief that practice in this area could be improved in order to improve learning for all students.

Is the proposed Fairview High School Grading Policy a policy that could be adopted by all BVSD High Schools?

Fairview, as well as Nederland and Centaurus, have a good start on a school-wide grading policy. This has been ongoing work for each of our middle and high schools. We discuss this regularly at Middle and High School Leadership Level Meetings. We have approached this work in a way that allows each high school to design their grading policies within the district policies.

What is the deadline for implementation of the SBG policy for BVSD High Schools?

All schools are required to have grading policies for publication by Spring 2009 and implementation by Fall 2009.

What exactly is Board Policy regarding the implementation of SBG? Teachers have informed BVEA that open discussions (shared decisions) regarding SBG was curtailed because they were told that it is Board Policy.

I have included Board Policy IKA in the text of this document. We welcome open discussion and dialogue regarding grading practices. If members feel that discussions have been curtailed, anyone can join our design team which meets three-four times a year. Grading and reporting systems need to be dynamic, responsive to changes in practice that we make based on our ever increasing body of knowledge. We should view this as our first step into a process that will be revisited and discussed.



Boulder Valley School District
File: IKA/IKAA/IKAB
Adopted: September 25, 1980
Revised: June 14, 2005

Grading Systems and Student Progress Reports to Parents

Associated Regulation: IKA-R/IKAA-R/IKAB-R

It is the policy of the Board of Education that the process for assessing and reporting student performance shall emphasize progress toward and achievement of the district's curriculum content standards, benchmarks, and essential learning results. The district administration and professional staff shall collaboratively devise a grading and reporting system for evaluating and reporting student progress that reflects student performance in relation to Board-adopted content standards, benchmarks, and essential learning results of the curriculum. Adjustments to the grading system for Special Education students or English Language Learner students shall be consistent with legal requirements in place at the time.

The grading system and reporting procedure shall take into consideration demands on teacher and parent time and must be in a form that is meaningful to students and parents. Reporting shall be consistent district-wide at comparable grade levels. Accurate records of pupil achievement based on an appropriate body of evidence shall be kept by each teacher and used to determine achievement during each marking period.

Cross Refs. :
IKC, Weighted Grades
IKC-R, Weighted Grades (Regulation),
and Associated Exhibits

End of File: IKA/IKAA/IKAB

Is there a plan in the future to convert to a “Standardized Teaching Policy?”

I am not sure that I understand exactly what is meant by this term. If it means all teachers will follow a prescriptive lesson format that indicates what content will be taught on what day, the answer is NO. We have resisted “pacing charts” that are very popular in other districts. If it means all teachers will follow a district adopted curriculum that articulates content, topics, and essential learning results, the answer is YES.

How have BVSD parents responded to the changes in the BVSD grading policy? Can BVSD provide any data (surveys, etc.) regarding parent assessment of the grading changes? Other stakeholder (community)?

At the elementary level, we conducted a number of parent surveys in the beginning stages of the report card development and made many changes based on parent feedback. Since our written surveys did not have a high return rate, focus groups were conducted in our pilot schools and an external evaluator collected feedback.

In general, parents appreciated a detailed report card that clarified what students were learning. While students were evaluated according to achievement of the standards, many parents and teachers desired a separate rating about the progress the student was making in the classroom. We added a rating for progress. Parents and teachers alike were concerned about evaluating a student's performance in relationship to an end-of-year standard; elementary teachers rate a student's performance in relationship to that part of the standard (essential learning result) that was covered during the trimester.

Formal data has not been collected at the secondary level at this time. While I don't believe that the frequency of calls to the central office regarding grading practices has not increased over the past three years, I do speak to parents periodically. Parents have called concerned that students are not expected to redo work that earns a grade of F clearly demonstrating a lack of understanding. The concern is that students are "let off the hook", when the middle school would have made them redo the assignment. I also receive a number of calls with parents inquiring about our policy about grades that are not rounded up—79.89% to 80%. I have also received many calls from parents who wonder about the correlation of a student's score on CSAP or an AP test and their grade; frequently the parent is concerned that a student is scoring higher on external exams than their grade in the class reflects (Advanced or a 5 and a grade of a C in the class). Related is the concern that a student has achieved A's and B's on tests, but is getting a C or lower in the class. Other inquiries are about individual students which I will not share here as they are confidential in nature.

Can BVSD provide any data (from teachers) that focuses on how students have "manipulated" the SBG systems at their schools? Teachers have informed BVEA that some students have figured out how to manipulate the system.

I do not have any data that would indicate that students have manipulated this system. However, I also don't have data regarding how students manipulated the previous system. Teacher decision-making is still an integral part of this system. If a teacher feels a student is abusing the system, then the teacher needs to take appropriate action. As high schools develop their grading policies, they should take into account this question.

Does the SBG system have any impact on how well ML students are prepared for high school? Teachers have informed BVEA that (some) ML students are not as prepared as a result of the SBG system?

In what ways are teachers indicating the students are not prepared? Is this lack of preparation due solely to grading and reporting or are there other variables that would need to be considered? As in the last question, as high schools develop their grading policies, they should take into account this question.

Will the IC system be compatible with the SBG process? IC cannot accommodate the details/sophistication of the SBG system.

It is true that IC has its issues. We continue to work with our IT department to problem-solve issues. Some of the decisions, such as weighting categories of assignments are individual teacher based. Other decisions, such as how missing assignments are recorded and equitable grading scales are building-based decisions.

Was there a standardized process of implementation for the SBG system at the Middle Level?

Yes. As with high school, our first step was to identify a secondary grading design team at the district level. Each middle school was invited to send a team to an initial district training based on the work of the district level design team. Based on the feedback from that training session, changes in the grading and reporting system were made and school-based trainings were offered at all middle schools.

At the high school level, in the fall of 2006, we asked high schools to send a team of teachers to an information session. This session presented the regulations associated with Board Policy IKA as well as best practices in grading.

In December 2006, we invited Rick Wormeli, a secondary teacher and author of **Fair Isn't Always Equal**, who conducted a two day session for secondary school teams regarding grading practices. Since 2007, middle and high school teachers have been using components of standards-based grading in pockets across the district. At the request of our secondary principals and teachers who attended the two day workshop in 2006, Rick will be back in January 2009. Each of our middle and high school teachers and administrators will have the opportunity to learn from Rick's experiences and expertise.