

(ATTACHMENT 1) ACTION ON A REQUEST TO REVISE ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES 7.33, GRADING SYSTEMS; AND 7.34, FINAL EXAMINATIONS; AND ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY 7.35 STUDENT PROGRESS REPORTS TO PARENTS

This item initiated by the Administration.

BACKGROUND

1. As has been previously reported to the Board of School Directors, the Administration has been addressing persistently low student achievement across the district in a systematic manner, advocating for consistency and coherence in curriculum, instruction, and assessment and reporting practices. With a focus on alignment of standards, curriculum and instruction, and consistent with best practices in student assessment and reporting, the Administration plans to implement a district-wide standards-based report card for grades K3-8. Feedback to students and families on rigorous standards is essential to improving teaching and learning. This is particularly true as we begin to roll out new, more challenging Common Core State Standards. The revised, K3-8 standards-based report card is only one component in this effort. Other efforts include formative assessments based on standards, student and parent conferences, and MAP universal screener/benchmark assessments to support more differentiated instruction and identify students for targeted supports. Each of these creates an opportunity for individual and groups of teachers to reflect on student learning and their own practice, and use meaningful, standards-specific feedback to empower students and engage families in monitoring student progress and improving learning.
2. The new report card is an evidence-based approach which allows MPS to communicate with parents and students about grade level standards. It identifies students' levels of progress with regard to those standards, areas of strength, and areas where additional time and effort are needed to meet expectations at a particular point in the school year. The new report card helps the MPS community transition to the Common Core State Standards language and supports student learning. In May, 2011, the Administration provided a conceptual overview for the Board of School Directors regarding upcoming recommendations for changes in grading and reporting practices which require updates to three inter-related administrative policies and procedures. This item provides detail on the specific changes requested.

ADMINISTRATION'S ANALYSIS

3. One of the major differences in standards-based reporting is the replacement of traditional grades with performance levels on standards. This means that, instead of students earning a single grade (e.g. A - F) in a subject like mathematics, they will receive more detailed feedback on their work from classroom assessments and other performance-based projects on specific topics like geometry, statistics and probability, or functions. Student performance will be reported as minimal, basic, proficient, or advanced in each of the areas taught and assessed that marking period. This change also clarifies grading practices for students with disabilities whose instruction targets regular grade level standards as well as those whose instruction addresses the alternate grade band standards per their Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). In addition, English Language Learners receive performance level indicators for their English language development.
4. Based on the initial pilot in 2010-2011, the district incorporated feedback from parent and teacher surveys and focus groups which led to improvements to the report card.

The revised standards-based report card was piloted in 35 schools in the Fall of 2011; this included students in grades K3 – 8. Resources such as a parent handbook (paper and web-based) and professional development options have strengthened the understanding of this report card for both parents and teachers.

5. Parents receive six reports of their students' progress: three interim progress reports in week 6, 18 and 30, and on the standards-based report card every twelve weeks at week 12, 24, and at the end of the school year. Only standards assessed that mark period have a performance level on the standards-based report card. At the end of the year, students will receive a "final grade" in the form of a final performance level for all standards in each subject area.
6. Educator professional development sessions are underway, both on the Common Core State Standards and on standards-based grading practices. Additional resources for classroom teachers include common pacing guides and common instructional resources. Additional resources are also being piloted to orient parents to the new reporting format.
7. To ensure consistency with the standards-based orientation for instruction, assessment, and reporting, the Administration recommends the following changes to Administrative Policy 7.33, Grading Systems (and associated procedure), Administrative Policy 7.34, Final Examinations (and associated procedure), and Administrative Policy 7.35, Student Progress Reports to Parents:
 - a. eliminate language in Administrative Policy and Procedure 7.33, 7.34, and 7.35 that is no longer applicable in Milwaukee Public Schools
 - b. add information to clarify grading for students with disabilities in Administrative Policy 7.33
 - c. add information about the standards-based performance scale in Administrative Procedure 7.33
 - d. add language about high school exemptions for final exams in Administrative Policy 7.34
 - e. change language about high school examination schedules to reflect current practices for final exams in Administrative Procedure 7.34
 - f. clarify qualifications for exemptions in Administrative Procedure 7.34
 - g. update language in Administrative Policy 7.35 to reflect a more effective communication plan with parents about student achievement, in alignment with interim progress and standards-based reporting periods in K-8 schools and communication schedules for courses at all levels

STRATEGIC PLAN COMPATIBILITY STATEMENT

8. The resolution supports the MPS *Working Together, Achieving More* (WTAM) strategic plan:
 - Goal 1: Students meet and exceed Wisconsin academic standards and graduate prepared for higher education, careers and citizenship.

WTAM Strategy: Students are assessed regularly to monitor progress toward improved academic achievement.

STATUTE, BOARD POLICY OR RULES STATEMENT

- 7. This item proposes changes to Administrative Policies and Procedures 7.33, Grading Systems; and 7.34, Final Examinations; and Administrative Policy 7.35 Student Progress Reports to Parents.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

- 8. This item does not authorize expenditures. Schools will incorporate implementation of the updated requirements in local budgets.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- 9. Upon approval by the Milwaukee Board of School Directors, the Administration will immediately notify principals, schools staff, families, and students of these changes. Use of the new common standards-based report card in grades K3-8 will be phased in over the next 2 years until all schools are implementing this report card. The district will continue evaluate this initiative with feedback from parents and teachers.

ADMINISTRATION’S RECOMMENDATION

The Administration recommends that the Board approve the following proposed changes to Administrative Policies and Procedures 7.33, Grading Systems; and 7.34, Final Examinations; and Administrative Policy 7.35 Student Progress Reports to Parents:

Administrative Policy 7.33

GRADING SYSTEMS

History	Codified 1976; revised 1984, 8-28-85, 3-26-86, 8-31-94, 2-22-95		
Previous Coding	Admin. Policy IKA, prior to May 1995; Admin. Policy 9.33, May 1995-August 1996		
Legal Ref.			
Contract Ref.			
Cross Ref.			
CROSS REF:	Admin. Policy	7.07	Physical Education
		7.34	Final Examinations
		7.37	Graduation Requirements
	Admin. Proc.	7.33	Grading Systems

(1) GENERAL PRINCIPLES

(a) ~~The Board believes that the~~ fear and stigma of failure are often significant hindrances to the educational process. ~~It feels that what~~ What a student has mastered, rather than what he/she was unable to master, is the important measure of a student's education. Therefore, the school system shall seek in its instructional program to make achievement both recognizable and possible for students, and it shall emphasize equity of opportunity and achievement in its instruction as well as its assessment and grading practices. ~~student evaluation processes.~~

(b) ~~The school administration and professional staff shall devise grading systems for evaluating and recording student progress within district guidelines. Principals shall provide opportunities for parental involvement in this process. The records and reports of individual students shall be kept in a form which shall be meaningful to parents as well as to teachers. Requests for assistance may be directed to the director of Educational Services. Changes that would have an impact on reporting for the school accountability system must be given final approval by the Board.~~

(e) ~~Upon review of grading practices, the Board finds that:~~ Grading practices in the Milwaukee Public Schools are based on the following principles:

1. ~~A standard score or percent system is appropriate for middle school and high school levels for those content areas for which objective, quantifiable evaluative measures can be used.~~ Performance levels indicate the degree to which a student has achieved grade level standards.
2. ~~Elementary specialty~~ All schools shall continue to inform parents of their unique grading practices through such means as the parent handbook for the standard-based report card, flyers, conferences, and parent meetings.
3. ~~Academic performance of exceptional education students with disabilities, who receive instruction based on the same grade level academic standards as their regular education peers, shall continue to be awarded~~ reflected in performance levels on their grade level standards-based report card, achieved with accommodations as stated grades of A, B, C, etc., based on achievement in their individualized education plans (IEPs).
Academic performance of students with significant disabilities, who receive instruction based on the alternate grade band academic standards, shall be awarded performance levels on their alternate grade band standards-based report card, achieved with modifications as stated in their individualized education plans (IEPs).
In addition to receiving the standards-based report card, all students with disabilities shall receive a progress report based on the goals of their individualized education plans (IEPs) with the frequency stated by the student's IEP.
4. ~~New~~ Standards-based report cards for grades K3-8 designed for high school shall provide for both achievement and effort grades and definitions of the same; and information regarding attendance and tardiness, as well as student behavior, in each course; and
5. On high school report cards, information on such matters as course difficulty (when it is an approved honors or advanced placement course, for example), status regarding competency requirements, mark-period and semester grade-point averages, and cumulative units earned, and cumulative units attempted will all be provided when possible.
6. ~~The importance of informing~~ All teachers must inform students at the beginning of a course of the grading practices for the course must be emphasized to all teachers.

(2) **GRADE CHANGES — MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS**

Each middle and high school shall establish a procedure on grade changes within the following guidelines:

- (a) No grade may be changed by anyone other than the teacher who issued the grade except under extraordinary circumstances;
- (b) Any transcript changes should be made through the school in which the original grade was issued;
- (c) ~~The following documents should be retained within the respective school for a minimum of five years: teachers' grade books, report card copies, and six week reports.~~

(3) **RECORD MAINTENANCE— ALL SCHOOLS**

- (a) The following documents should be retained within the respective school for a minimum of five years: teachers' grade books, report card copies, and interim progress reports. Only those documents that are not present in electronic format must be kept in hard copy for the five year period.

Administrative Procedure 7.33

GRADING SYSTEMS

History	Approved prior to 1976; Revised 5-7-74
Previous Coding	
Legal Ref.	
Contract Ref.	
Cross Ref.	Admin. Policy 7.33 Grading Systems

In accordance with administrative policy, the following grading systems have been approved for use in the school system at the various levels:

(1) ELEMENTARY GRADES 1-3

~~(a) It takes time to recognize the learning power of each child. In these early years, growth may be rapid during one period and slow during another; therefore, it seems wise to use a narrow marking system until the growth and power can be more definitely determined.~~

~~(b) The following marks may be given:~~

~~C — At or above grade level~~

~~D — Below grade level~~

~~1 — Very Good~~

~~2 — Satisfactory~~

~~3 — Needs to Improve~~

(2) ELEMENTARY GRADES 4-8 K3-8

(a) The following ~~grades~~ performance levels will be used to record student achievement and to present, ~~in the best judgment of the school,~~ the growth that has taken place in ~~those personal characteristics~~ grade-level appropriate state or national academic standards which have been assessed during each marking period that make for good citizenship in the school and community:

A — Excellent progress and achievement

B — Above average progress and achievement

C — Average progress and achievement

D — Less than average progress and achievement

U — Unsatisfactory progress and achievement

G — Good progress, but achievement is below grade level.

AD: Advanced, exceeding grade level expectations

PR: Proficient, meeting grade level expectations

BA: Basic, just below grade level expectations

MI: Minimal, far below grade level expectations

Blank indicates an area that is not assessed during this Mark Period

The grade for each mark period indicates a performance level for expectations at that point in the school year. The K3/K4 and some areas of the K5 report card also use the frequency scale to show developmental progress: 1: Seldom 2: Sometimes 3: Usually 4: Always/Exemplary

(3) SECONDARY LEVEL

(a) Within the limitations listed below, students will be allowed to enroll in courses with the understanding that their accomplishments in those courses will be evaluated either as successful (passing) or unsuccessful (unsatisfactory). For a successful completion of a course a grade of "P" will be given to students and entered on their permanent records. For unsuccessful performance, the standard grade of "U" will be assigned. This option will be available in all senior high schools (grades nine through 12) under the following conditions:

For encouraging upperclassmen to take higher level courses:

1. This option will be open only to juniors or seniors who have earned at least half the number of units needed for graduation.

2. This option may be used for a maximum of one unit per year.
3. Parents of students exercising this option should be apprised of and involved in the decision. Local schools will design a procedure to accomplish this.
4. Students will decide to exercise this option at subject selection time. Final adjustment will be completed by the end of the second week of classes.

For all high school students in remedial courses:

1. Certain courses will be determined by the district to be remedial courses for grade 9-12 students. These courses will meet graduation requirements only as an elective.
2. The district will determine the exact course codes that can be qualify as Pass/Fail remedial courses.
3. Each school will communicate the alternate grading method to parents in writing.

~~(b) Local schools will be permitted and encouraged to offer educational experiences to students on a credit/no credit basis. This will generally be most appropriate for mini courses, as well as for the many community based experiences which are becoming part of the curriculum. Such a grading system may also be considered for the enrichment component of summer schools. As with other courses, the Board expects that all courses using this grading system will be developed with the cooperation and approval of the Division of Curriculum and Instruction.~~

~~(c) For successful accomplishment in one of these courses, credit will be earned and a grade of "P" would be assigned. For unsuccessful performance, a grade of "N" would be reported to parents, but would not appear on the student's record, nor will it be computed into the grade point average.~~

~~(d) (b) Incorporating the above with the standard grading practice in the secondary schools, it will be possible for students to earn the following grades:~~

~~P – Passing (successful accomplishment) – not computed into grade-point average.~~

~~A – Excellent (outstanding)~~

~~B – Above average (good)~~

~~C – Average (satisfactory)~~

~~D – Below average (passing)~~

~~E – Lowest passing grade (remedial effort needed prior to enrollment in next level in a sequential course of study.)~~

~~N – No credit (not recorded on permanent record) For schools with project based programs, the N can be used to indicate that a project is spanning multiple reporting periods and may not be complete yet during this course. The N is replaced with a regular achievement grade once the project is completed and assessed and must be replaced before the student withdraws from the project based school program.~~

~~U – Unsatisfactory (unsuccessful performance)~~

~~I – Incomplete (This is a temporary grade that must be replaced by the actual achievement grade.)~~

~~(e) A grade of "E" is intended for use only in areas where a sequence of courses exists and successful performance at one level virtually requires knowledge of concepts and skills developed in the preceding course. Where such a grade is assigned, it will indicate that, although a student has not met minimum achievement requirements, a passing grade is being granted because the student has consistently tried with reasonable effort, but and his/her level of performance is such that he/she probably would not be successful in a subsequent course in the sequence.~~

~~(f) The grade of "E" would also indicate that, if a student wished to continue in that area of study, he/she would need remedial help. Local schools will decide the nature and type of remedial efforts which they would accept as evidence of increased performance. This could include repeating the course, successfully completing summer school, engaging in independent study, taking a mini course in skill development, passing a departmental proficiency test, or other local options.~~

~~(g) The grade of "E" will be assigned the same quality points as a grade of "D." The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education shall be asked to determine in which courses this grade will be permitted.~~

Administrative Policy 7.34

FINAL EXAMINATIONS

History	Adopted 2-7-78; revised 2-22-95
Previous Coding	Admin. Policy IAAA, prior to May 1995; Admin. Policy 9.34, May 1995-August 1996
Legal Ref.	
Contract Ref.	MTEA Contract (Teachers)
Cross Ref.	Admin. Proc. 7.34 Final Examinations

(1) Final examinations shall be given ~~in all senior high schools~~ to all students in grades 9-12 during a designated examination schedule in accordance with district procedures developed by the superintendent and approved by the Board.

(2) Students who are excusably absent from a final examination, if unable to take the examination before the close of the current semester, shall have the examination deferred until not later than the fourth week of the following semester, and the final mark shall be held open until the examination is completed.

(3) Students who are inexcusably absent from an examination shall be marked as failing the examination and shall have the failure counted in averaging the semester grade. ~~Such failure shall result in a point value of zero on the five point scale of A=4 points through E=0 points.~~

(4) Students may be eligible to qualify for exemptions in accordance with district procedures developed by the superintendent.



Administrative Procedure 7.34

FINAL EXAMINATIONS

History	Adopted 2-7-78
Previous Coding	
Legal Ref.	
Contract Ref.	MTEA Contract (Teachers)
Cross Ref.	Admin. Policy 7.34 Final Examinations

- (1) Final examinations will be:
1. given ~~in senior high schools~~ to all students in grades 9-12 during a special examination schedule ~~of three half days (or three morning sessions), with no more than three 75-minute examination periods per day and with student attendance required only during periods of examinations in which the student is involved;~~
 2. scheduled during the final week of the course ~~preceding the final examination schedule for classes which meet less than daily;~~
 3. given in all courses, with the exception of such courses specifically exempted by the Superintendent or a designee;
 4. of written, oral, and/or performance nature, as is determined by the teacher with the approval of the principal following involvement of the department chairperson. Three weeks prior to the ~~semester~~ examinations, teachers are to file with the principal a copy of the examinations (for written examinations) or a plan of the examinations (for oral or performance examinations);
 5. given a weight of 25% of the final course grade;
 6. required of all students, with students being eligible to exercise two exemptions under the following conditions:
 - a. a "B" average in the course and a grade of B or better in the final ~~or third~~ mark period of the course;
 - b. no unexcused absences; and

c. ~~no more than 6 excused absences in the class. 95% or better attendance in that course~~

7. aligned to standards. In final exams, students may be exempt from certain sections for which they have already demonstrated proficiency on those specific standards. This partial exemption does not count towards the eligible two complete exemptions in #6.

(2) Copies of examinations and student answer sheets (for written examinations), as well as the plans of examinations used in oral or performance examinations, are to be kept on file for a period of one year.

(3) ~~Six week mark periods will be established for senior high schools, effective with the 1978-1979 school year.~~

(4) ~~Credits will be awarded on a semester basis upon successful completion of a course in grades 9-12, effective with the 1978-1979 school year.~~

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Administrative Policy 7.35

STUDENT PROGRESS REPORTS TO PARENTS

History	Adopted 4-6-72, 4-1-87; revised 1-6-82, 2-22-95
Previous Coding	Admin. Policy IKAB, prior to May 1995; Admin. Policy 9.35, May 1995-August 1996
Legal Ref.	
Contract Ref.	MTEA Contract (Teachers)
Cross Ref.	

(1) ~~The Board feels that it is essential for~~ To ensure that parents to be are kept as fully informed as possible of their children's progress in school, parents, at elementary and K-8 schools, will receive six reports of their students' progress: three interim progress reports and three standards-based report cards. Only standards assessed that mark period will have a performance level on the standards-based report card. At the end of the year, students will receive a "final grade" in the form of a final performance level for all standards in each subject area. Traditional middle and high school report cards will be distributed to parents at the end of each mark period based on each school's course schedule.

(2) ~~The city wide progress report is provided to parents six times a year. Modifications of the city wide report may be devised by the school staff in cooperation with the Department of Educational Services and with parental involvement. Requests to change the content and/or frequency of the progress reports should be addressed to the director of the department of Educational Services for approval. Interim progress reports will be distributed to parents of all students in grades K3-8 to indicate if achievement is at grade level in each content area. In traditional middle and high schools, the schedule for interim progress reports, if needed, is determined by the course schedule at each school.~~

(3) ~~Student achievement shall be reported in a meaningful manner. At elementary levels, student achievement in developmental reading shall be indicated on every report card. At the middle level, the report shall include a comment on student achievement in reading, mathematics, and language arts.~~

(4) ~~(3) These Progress reports to parents shall be supplemented by the local schools with other means of effective communication with parents, such as parent-teacher conferences, group meetings, displays, and timely informational reports on matters of import concerning individual students.~~

(5) ~~(4) All parents are to be notified prior to the end of the third (of six) grading period. At schools serving students in grades K3-8, parents will be notified in January and March if their children are in danger of failing being retained at the current grade-level for the following school year. The notification should be in time for parents to intervene in the educational process in order to prevent, if possible, the failure from occurring. The principal of each school, working with his/her faculty, is responsible for determining methods of communication to be used to carry out this policy. Documentation of this notification shall be retained at the school level for one year.~~

(5) At the high school level, parents will be notified at the half-way point in a course if their children are in danger of failing that course. The notification should be in time for parents to intervene in the educational process in order to prevent, if possible, the failure from occurring. The principal of each school, working with his/her faculty, is responsible for determining methods of communication to be

used to carry out this policy. Documentation of this notification shall be retained at the school level for one year.

(6) The schools shall attempt to involve parents continuously in communication about their children's achievement. Parental contacts involvement shall be documented.

(7) ~~The absences of students during class periods, as well as daily absences,~~ Student absences shall be recorded on reports to parents.

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