

May 1, 2020

Dear San Rafael High School District Students and Families:

The purpose of this letter is to clarify our high school grading policies for the second semester of 2020, including how we will grade students during the closure of our schools due to the COVID-19 epidemic. We understand the tremendous difficulties and hardships that this crisis has caused for so many of our families and students, and we know how hard it may be for some of our students to engage fully in learning during this unprecedented time. We hope that this policy will allow students and families the flexibility they need to choose the right decision for each student. At the 4/27/2020 School Board meeting, our Trustees decided to allow students a choice in grading between letter grades or credit/no credit. Let me take a moment to explain the rationale and then explain how this policy will work in more detail. The grading policy is attached to this letter for you to read closely.

This was a hard decision to make, but our district staff and all high school principals came to this recommendation after weeks of study, listening, and research. Five guiding principles were used to guide our recommendation to the Board:

1. Keep all students' academic and social-emotional needs at the center of our decision.
2. Hold students harmless for grades during the closure due to the response to the spread of COVID-19, meaning no child will be penalized for circumstances related to COVID 19 that interfere with their ability to learn in the 4th quarter.
3. Ensure our decision is aligned with our district values of equity, community, and joy. Equity means that students have different needs, and so the job of the school is to do what it takes to help meet those disparate needs, especially for those students furthest from educational justice.
4. Avoid overly complicated solutions and make a decision that is practical for our teachers to implement.
5. Provide incentives for students to stay engaged in their learning and to keep motivated to learn.

This policy intends to provide a balance between our expectations to provide continuous learning opportunities for our students and keep them engaged with the understanding that many students are not able to participate in learning as they were before the crisis. One key element that was required by the California Department of Education was that districts "hold students harmless" for learning in the 4th quarter so that they are not penalized for circumstances due to COVID-19 that prevent them from learning. We will not punish students who are in crisis by lowering third-quarter grades during the fourth quarter.

Here are a few key clarifications and reminders concerning the grading policy:

- Students must decide whether they will want grades or credit/no credit by **MAY 15, 2020**. Students must choose one option or the other. Selecting the credit/no credit option will have no impact on a students' GPA. Students may inform their teacher, their counselor, or the school administration of their decision. If we do not hear from a student, we will assume they want the credit/no credit option.
- For students selecting the grading option, the third quarter grade will be the main consideration. Students will be allowed to improve upon this grade, but will only have this grade reduced by a maximum of one grade if they do not work, do not participate, make no effort, and do not contact the teacher.
- For students selecting the credit/no credit option, again, the third quarter grade will be the main consideration. Teachers will be understanding and empathetic to individual student needs during this time and will make every effort to work with students to ensure they receive credit for the semester. Students will need to make an effort to participate, to stay in touch with the teacher, and to do whatever assigned work they can during this time.
- Learning from home is much different than learning in the classroom, and can be much more difficult for students without the personal interaction of teachers and peers. If a student needs additional support to understand the curriculum and assignments, please reach out to the teacher during office hours for personal assistance.

Progress Reports will be sent home next week to provide students with an update on where they stand currently in each class. Teachers will try to provide feedback and let students know how they are doing to help them decide whether to choose a grade or credit/no credit. Please contact your teacher if you have any questions at all about your grade or standing in the class.

It is very important for students to stay in contact with their teachers and school administration during this crisis. We know that the social-emotional health of our students and families is in peril, and we have mental health resources and counseling services available to assist students. If a student needs access to a Chromebook or the internet, please contact the school administration. Chromebooks and personal hotspots to allow internet connection are available for check out.

Thank you so much for hanging in there with us during this coronavirus crisis. We are here to help in any way we can, and our top priority is the health and safety of your family. Let us know if there is anything you need or assistance we can provide.

Sincerely,



Jim Hogeboom, Superintendent