April 20, 2020

STUDENT GRADES DURING CLOSURE

Dear Kern High School District staff members:

As we begin our second month of school closures due to the Coronavirus/COVID-19 health crisis, the Kern High School District continues its steadfast commitment to its students’ education and wellbeing. Recently, the District enhanced its use of technology to support distance learning by issuing thousands of electronic devices to students in need. Our success to date in providing our students with a quality and meaningful education is because our teachers and support staff have committed to lesson planning, ongoing daily engagement with students and parents/guardians, continued preparation of materials and technology assistance, commitment to curriculum-based learning requirements, continued meal and nutrition services, mental health counseling and support, and generally ensuring every single day that students and parents know that we are here for them, we value their education, we are working hard, and that we care. I sincerely appreciate your flexibility and willingness to adapt to these new challenges.

Over the last several weeks we have received many questions about how our students will be graded for the academic work they perform from home during the second semester of this school year. The District has been working with state and local education officials, including receiving guidance from Governor Gavin Newsom and State Superintendent of Instruction Tony Thurmond, in order to determine the most effective and appropriate grading methods given the current circumstances. Not only are our students’ grades very important to evaluate a student’s academic progress, but we have also been working to determine how these grades will impact our students’ future college ambitions and admission requirements.

Therefore, in order to ensure equitable and reasonable grading for all students the Kern High School District will adopt a Pass/No Pass grading system for the 2019-2020 spring semester and the 2020 summer session.

KHSD Comprehensive High School Pass/No Pass Spring Semester Grading

Pass/No Pass grading means that a student will not receive a traditional letter grade (A, B, C, D, or F) for the spring semester this school year. Instead, students’ transcripts will reflect that a student either passed the course (P) or did not pass the course (NP). Whether a student passes or does not pass a class will be evaluated as follows:

A student will receive a Pass for the spring semester if the student had a grade of A, B, C, or D for the third quarter. Of course, students must continue their studies in the fourth quarter by working from home with the ongoing
assistance of their teachers so that the students are able to access the essential learnings of each subject in order to successfully advance next school year.

A student who was failing at the time of the school closure on March 18, 2020, will be given the opportunity to raise their grade during the fourth quarter in order to receive a Pass for the semester. I am asking every teacher to contact all students who failed a third quarter class in order to develop a personalized plan for the student to review and learn the course’s academic content in order to receive a deserved passing grade.

**KHSD Alternative Education Pass/No Pass Spring Session Grading**

Alternative Education, which includes Continuation School, Workforce and Independent Study, delivers courses in several sessions throughout the school year that do not align with the comprehensive high school semesters. Alternative Education programs will not utilize third quarter grades to calculate session grades; students will need to complete the assigned course work for this current session to earn course credits. All Alternative Education students will receive a Pass on the transcript for the current session once the required course work is satisfactorily completed.

The University of California, California State University, California Community Colleges, and the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities recently met to discuss the impact of statewide school closures on high school students in order to ensure that students are held harmless from any negative impacts because of the closures. As a result, the college and university systems are willing to accept Pass/No Pass grades in lieu of letter grades for all courses. Grades of Pass/No Pass will not affect how the colleges and universities calculate students’ grade point averages for admission.

If you have students who were passing your class at the conclusion of the third quarter or just started a new Alternative Education session, and who are not adequately engaging in ongoing learning, please immediately reach out to the students and their parents in order to determine the circumstances and to provide appropriate supports. During these conversations, it is important to not only generally check on students, but to reiterate to them that continuing their studies is not only expected, but is vitally important to a student’s ability to begin classes next school year as prepared as possible.

I am aware that you are receiving myriad questions from students and parents about issues beyond studies and grades and I appreciate the difficulty you may be experiencing in addressing their concerns. The District will soon publish a frequently asked questions page on its website at [www.kernhigh.org](http://www.kernhigh.org) in order to address the concerns and questions of our students, parents/guardians, and community regarding such topics as academic counseling, transcripts, graduation, grades, and more. I hope that this will be a valuable resource for you as well.

The COVID-19 school closures has been the most unexpected and difficult challenge most of us have ever faced in our professional careers. Yet we continue to adapt and meet head on the issues we face each day, and our students will succeed. You continue to positively impact and shape our students’ lives, even from home. I cannot thank you enough for all of your creativity, resilience, and support for your students and for your colleagues.

Sincerely,

Bryon Schaefer, Ed.D.
Superintendent