



YPI CHARTER SCHOOLS

February 28, 2022

TO: YPI Charter Schools
Board of Directors

FROM: Yvette King-Berg
Executive Director

SUBJECT: Recommendation to approve YPICS No Ds and Fs High School Policy

BACKGROUND

Los Angeles, Santa Ana, Oakland Unified, Sacramento City Unified, and other California districts have decided to limit the use of “Ds” and phased out “Fs” in grading. High schoolers who fail a test or homework assignment can get a do-over or more time to complete the work.

Students who don’t ever finish the assignments or who fail the final exam would earn an “incomplete,” according to EdSource.

ANALYSIS

Some of California’s largest school districts are trying an unconventional tactic to help students re-engage in school after distance learning and boost their chances of acceptance into the state’s public colleges: by dropping D and F grades.

The move is more in alignment with the YPICS Standards Based Grading learning system, in which students are assessed by what they’ve learned, not how well they perform on tests on a given day or whether they turn in their homework on time. Known as competency — or mastery-based learning. YPICS moved to this system years ago, but the D’s and F’s are a carryover from the old high school grading system.

Traditional grading may have worked for previous generations, a competency-based system is better suited for the rapidly changing workplace of the future. , said Devin Vodicka, former superintendent of Vista Unified in San Diego County and chief executive of the Learner-Centered Collaborative, a nonprofit that helps districts shift to competency-based learning. “We need a system that gets beyond the institutional model and provides more meaningful feedback for students,” Vodicka said. “The future is going to require less focus on time and more focus on what we can do and contribute, and the quality of our performance. We need to prepare our students for this.”

“Instruction is what leads to learning. Not grading. They’re separate. That’s the problem — we have a disconnect between instruction, learning and grading,” said Alix Gallagher, director of strategic partnerships at Policy Analysis for California Education.

Grades are notoriously subjective. The state Education Code gives teachers the authority to issue grades, but it doesn’t specify how those grades should be determined. Some teachers grade on a curve, with only a set number of students earning A’s or B’s, while others are laxer. An informal EdSource survey of about two dozen California teachers found that 57% rarely or never gave D.s and F’s. Only 7% said they did frequently. Too often grades take on outsized importance for students, and those who get Ds or Fs become discouraged or disengage even further, never learning the material they missed to begin with.

Dropping D’s and F’s is a way to help students who had been most impacted by the pandemic, especially Black, Latino, and low-income students.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board of Directors approve the YPICS No Ds and F’s High School Grading Policy.

Attachment: the YPICS No Ds and Fs High School Grading Policy



YPI CHARTER SCHOOLS No Ds and Fs High School Grading Policy

Policy

YPICS will phase out grades below a C for high school students, effective immediately. If a student fails a test or doesn't complete their homework, they'll be able to retake the test and get more time to turn in assignments.

The adopted Standards based Grading Policy already has the goal of learning course material and YPICS scholars should not be derailed by a low grade that could potentially disqualify them from admission to the University of California and California State University. Therefore, Students who do not learn the material, pass the final exam, or finish homework by the end of the semester would earn an "incomplete."

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to encourage scholars to begin to see school as a place of learning, where they can take risks and learn from mistakes, instead of a place of compliance. Grades are linked to time; a grade reflects how well a student has performed on tests and homework by the end of a semester. Grades can open doors to advanced classes and are the primary component of college admissions, especially since universities like UC and CSU temporarily dropped standardized tests as part of the admissions criteria.

Currently to many YPICS scholars are struggling academically after a year and one half of distance learning. Grades are punitive and provide no information on standards mastery. YPICS strives to provide less subjective assessment and believe that scholars should receive authentic feedback.

YPICS will continue to encourage scholars to submit a portfolio that includes essays, tests with high scores, videos showing oral presentations, lab projects or other items that showcase a student's best work.

The idea is to show colleges evidence of what a student can do, not a teacher's interpretation based on a limited grading scale. The aim is a grading system that puts students on track for admission to the UC and CSU, as well as trade schools (college and career ready)!

This policy is about giving support, not lowering standards, and looking for simple ways to make grading fairer, to give scholars a fighting chance and to measure what students know with multiple opportunities to demonstrate their mastery.