

**PIEDMONT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**M E M O R A N D U M**

**TO:** Board of Education

**FROM:** Dr. Donald Evans, Interim Superintendent  
Dr. Cheryl Wozniak, Assistant Superintendent

**PRESENTERS:** Sukanya Goswami, Piedmont High School Principal  
Karyn Shipp, Piedmont Middle School Principal  
Jamie Van Kleeck, PMS English Teacher  
Kate Waldron, PMS Math Teacher

**DATE:** March 22, 2023

**RE:** **GOAL 2, LCAP ACTION: EQUITABLE GRADING PRACTICES**

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**PURPOSE:** To educate the community about equitable grading practices—an action item in the Local Control Accountability Plan in its early stages of exploration

**BACKGROUND:**

LCAP Goal 2 states: *All students will engage in relevant learning experiences that foster life-long curiosity, creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, communication, and responsible citizenship.* The fourth category in Goal 2 is equitable teaching and grading practices. PUSD staff are exploring alternative grading practices and policies. We are in the early stages of our discussions and will be learning from other districts who are further along in implementing new grading policies. This is the first public discussion and will plan future parent engagement opportunities at the site level.

<b>Equitable Teaching and Grading Practices</b>	<b>A. Identify essential learning outcomes</b>
	(i) Complete the process of identifying Essential Learning Outcomes in all secondary courses to ensure all students have mastered the essential standards
	<b>B. Explore alternative grading policies</b>
	(i) Review current grading practices and explore equitable grading policies in middle school and high school by engaging in a secondary book study of <i>Grading for Equity</i> (ii) Convene an Academic Integrity Task Force to study current secondary academic integrity policies and to recommend best practices on how to respond school-wide to student cheating incidents

In 2021, PUSD staff attended a county office presentation on equitable grading practices. San Leandro Unified administration shared the changes their high school teachers were making in

their grading practices after engaging in action research around the essential question: Which grading practices are most accurate, bias-resistant, and motivate continued learning? ACOE created a professional learning community (PLC) with teachers across the county to study the book, *Grading for Equity*, and engage in conversations led by the author, Joe Feldman. Members of the PMS teaching staff and the principals participated and after many conversations last school year, they made a school-wide agreement to try one of a few equitable grading practices.

For several years, Piedmont High School teachers, counselors, administrators, and Board members have been concerned about student stress. PHS staff have seen an increased overemphasis on grades versus what students are learning. In December, 2019, three months before Covid and shelter-in-place, there was a Board workshop on student stress and grades/grading practices was one of the topics discussed. Last school year, a small group of teachers read *Grading for Equity* and some teachers are trying out new strategies for grading. This year, more of the PHS staff members are studying the book and discussions are happening schoolwide.

Discussions about equitable grading practices are happening locally in neighboring districts like Palo Alto and Acalanes, as well as nationwide in districts like Boston Public Schools where they are creating new policies to ensure equitable outcomes for students. The 100-point traditional grading scale dates as far back as the 1860s. Educators across the nation are having discussions about its inherent flaws and how to instead align their grading practices with more current instructional practices. The goal is to inspire students to learn, not just get an 'A.'

For more information about equitable grading, see the list of resources below. This is not intended to be a comprehensive list but a set of initial resources for parents to review so they can engage with teachers and administrators in meaningful conversations about this topic.

## **RESOURCES**

[Grading for Equity: What It Is, Why It Matters, and How It Can Transform Schools and Classrooms](#) - Joe Feldman

[Boston Public Schools: Equitable Grading](#) - Boston Public Schools

[No More A's and F's? Teachers experiment with 'standards-based grading'](#) - Palo Alto Weekly

[Grading for equity in the Acalanes district: Striving to accurately measure student learning and understanding](#)

[How Teachers are Changing Grading Practices with an Eye on Equity](#) - KQED

[Does Grading Undermine your Equity Initiatives?](#) - Leadership

[What's in a Grade: Districts Examine How Traditional Grading Practices Affect Equity](#) -CSBA

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

None