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Eastmont School District External Audit of Grading Practices

Purpose of Audit

Identify grading practices that may be discriminatory in the area of student or family socio-economic factors, ethnicity, or student gender, and other categories protected under Title IX by school and program.



- 1. What are the current grading practices used in the Eastmont SD?
- 2. Are any of the grading practices used in the Eastmont SD discriminatory in the area of student/family socio-economic factors, ethnicity, or student gender and other categories protected under Title IX by school and program?
- 3. What strategies could be used to address potentially discriminatory practices in the Eastmont SD?

METHODS.

Methods

- Reviewed Existing Data
 - District Policy
 - School Handbooks
 - Junior High and High School Syllabi
- Administered an Online Survey
 - All District Faculty and Staff
 - 414 Respondents
- Conducted Interviews and Focus Groups
 - 19 interviews and focus groups with 76 participants
 - Administrators (8), Teachers (35), Students (25) and Parents

Survey Respondent Demographics (n = 414)

District Faculty and Staff (February 23rd to March 6th)



Sex

RESULTS.



Audit Question 1:

What are the current grading practices used in the Eastmont SD?



Standards Based Grading has been adopted by each of the five Elementary Schools (K-4)

Points Based Grading is the primary method used in Intermediate/Middle/Secondary Schools (5-12)

District, Schools and Teachers have made attempts across the board to reduce subjective grading practices

Current Grading Practices: Existing Documents

- School Policy (Student Handbooks)
 - Most Handbooks are available online
 - Elementary Schools
 - No handbooks provide a clear description of school grading policy (i.e., standards based grading)
 - Do not describe the implications of accommodations and modifications on grading
 - Intermediate Schools
 - Do not provide a clear description of school grading policy
 - Do not not describe the implications of accommodations and modifications on grading
 - Junior High and High School
 - Somewhat specific description of grading practices
 - Do not describe the implications of accommodations and modifications on grading

Current Grading Practices: Existing Documents

- Classroom Policy (course syllabi)
 - Junior High and High School Syllabi Only
 - Assessed Nine Domains
 - Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes
 - Assignments
 - Attendance Policy
 - Late Work Policy
 - Test/Exam Retake Policy
 - Accommodations and Modifications Policy
 - Grading Scale Weights
 - Course Calendar
 - Assignments Grading Rubrics
 - Each Domain scored on Level of Specificity from 0 to 3 (0 = No description; 3 = very specific description included)
 - Averages and cumulative scores calculated for each school

Eastmont School District Grading Audit Syllabus Evaluation Rubric				
Syllabus Element	0	1	2	3
Course objectives and learning outcomes	 No course objectives and learning outcomes listed on the syllabus 	 Vague course objectives and learning outcomes listed on the syllabus 	 Specific course objectives and learning outcomes listed on the syllabus 	 Very specific course objectives and learnin outcomes listed on the syllabus; and, link to common core when appropriate.
Assignments	 No description of assignments provided on the syllabus 	 Vague description of assignment categories listed on the syllabus 	 Specific Assignments listed on the syllabus 	 Specific assignments and points possible t each assignment listed on the syllabus
Attendance Policy	 No attendance policy included on the syllabus 	 Vague description of attendance policy listed on the syllabus 	 Specific description of attendance policy listed on the syllabus 	 Very specific description of attendance policy listed on the syllabus.
Late Work Policy	 No late work policy included on the syllabus 	 Vague description of late work policy listed on the syllabus 	Specific description of late work policy listed on the syllabus	 Very specific description of late work poli- listed on the syllabus.
Test/Exam Retake Policy	 No test/exam retake policy included on the syllabus 	 Vague description of test/exam retake policy listed on the syllabus 	 Specific description of test/exam retake policy listed on the syllabus 	 Very specific description of test/exam retake policy listed on the syllabus.
Accommodations and Modifications Policy	 No accommodations and modifications policy included on the syllabus 	 Vague description of accommodations and modifications policy listed on the syllabus 	 Specific description of accommodations and modifications policy listed on the syllabus 	 Very specific description of accommodations and modifications policy listed on the syllabus.
Grading Scale	 No grading scale included on the syllabus 	 Vague description of the scale that will be used for grading 	 Specific description of the scale that will be used for grading, including assignment weights, etc. 	 Very specific description of the grading scale including a total breakdown of point that will be assigned during the course of class.
Course calendar	 No course calendar included on the syllabus 	 Vague description of the timeline of the course; including segments or sections of the course. 	 Detailed description of the timeline for the course; including a week by week timeline. 	 Very detailed description of the timeline f the course; including, due dates for all major assignments.
Grading rubric for each assignment	 No grading rubrics included with the syllabus. 	 Grading rubric included for at least one assignment. 	Grading rubric included for more than one assignment.	Grading rubric included for all assignment

Syllabi Scoring Rubric (*n* = 55)

Junior High



Syllabi Scoring Rubric (*n* = 115)

High School



Syllabi Scoring Rubric (n = 170)

Junior High and High School



Current Grading Practices: Online Survey

Beliefs about Grading Practices

Current Grading Practices

Current Grading Policy

Beliefs about Grading District Faculty and Staff Survey (February 23rd to March 6th)





Level of agreement with statements about grading practices for those who assign grades (n ≈ 275)

(1 = strongly disagree; 6 = strongly agree)

I assign grades in a non-discriminatory way I am open about my grading practices I have clearly established grading policies Students grades inform my teaching I am confident in my approach to grading I trust the assessments I use for grades Expectations about grading are clear to me I get to choose the way that I grade My grading practices are chosen as a group Same standards for English Lang. Learners Some of my grading is difficult to measure Students give me feedback on my grading Grades are based upon effort I pass IEP/504 who have not met req. Grades based on participation Same standards for students on IEP/504 I provide opportinities for extra credit I pass ELL who have not met requirements Grades based upon on time assignments Grades based on appropriate behavior Grades are in comparison to other students Grades based on attendance and on time Grades based on students physical ability



18

6

Beliefs about Grading for those who assign grades District Faculty and Staff Survey (February 23rd to March 6th)



Of those who allow retakes, does the retake score replace the previous score?



Audit Question 2:

Are any of the grading practices used in the Eastmont SD discriminatory in the area of student/family socioeconomic factors, ethnicity, or student gender and other categories protected under Title IX by school and program?



Discriminatory Grading Practices: Existing Documents

• District policy is OK and aligns with state policy

- Policies are pretty unobtrusive
- Policies do permit grading based on non-academic factors (i.e., attendance, participation)

- School Policy (Student Handbook) has room for improvement
 - Non-specific descriptions of grading practices may lead to confusion and inconsistencies in expectations
 - No information about accommodations and modifications may lead to confusion and inconsistencies in expectations

Discriminatory Grading Practices: Existing Documents

• Overall specificity of Course Syllabi may lead to confusion and inconsistencies in expectations.

- Potentially Discriminatory Grading Practices Identified on the Junior High Syllabi by the auditors
 - Late work includes a grade penalty (17)
 - A summative test is treated as a final exam and can be taken just once (4)
 - All retakes must be completed prior to the test for the next unit. Prior to a retake all missing work must be turned in. Study session with a teacher must be completed before a retake. (3)
 - Extra credit will be awarded for not using the bathroom (1)
 - Uses standards based grading but does not explain what it is or how It will be used to evaluate students. (1)
- Potentially Discriminatory Grading Practices Identified on the High School Syllabi Policies by the auditors
 - Late work includes a grade penalty (12)
 - There will be no retakes of objective type tests and quizzes. There may be rewrites allowed for essays or extended response questions IF the teacher so chooses. It is entirely up to the teacher's discretion (6)
 - If a student refuses to dress down, they will be referred to administration and points will be deducted (2)
 - B's are the most common grades in my classes. class of 30, there are usually about 5-10 A's; some go to naturally talented kids who love art, but most go to kids who just know how to work (1)
 - This grading scale will determine assessment on all assignments and exams, with the following exceptions: 88% = B+, 78% = C+, 68% = D+(1)

Discriminatory Grading Practices: Online Survey

• Potentially Discriminatory Grading Practices Identified by Elementary School Faculty and Staff

- It is unfair for grades to be based on language proficiency (4)
- It is unfair for grades to not include effort (2)
- It is unfair for grades to not include improvement over time (2)
- It is unfair for grades to not include daily work (1)
- It is unfair for grades to be based on attendance (1)
- It is unfair for grades to be based on homework completion (1)
- "It is unfair for grades to be based on any individual characteristics" (1)
- It is unfair to penalize late work (1)
- It is unfair to use Standards Based Grading for English language learners, students with disabilities, and students from low-socio economic backgrounds (1)

• Potentially Discriminatory Grading Practices Identified by Intermediate School Faculty and Staff

- Unfair for grades to be based on homework completion (4)
- Unfair for grades to be based on language proficiency (3)
- Unfair because teachers don't have the tools that they need to meet the needs of all students (2)
- Unfair not to use standards based grading (2)
- Unfair for grades to not include effort (2)
- Unfair for grades to not include homework (1)
- Unfair for late work to not be accepted (1)
- Unfair to not allow retakes (1)
- It's unfair for there to be inconsistencies between teachers of the same grade level and content (1)
- Unfair to include extra credit from work at home (1)
- Unfair for grades to be based on students resources at home (1)
- "Inadvertent discrimination" (1)

5-7 Faculty and Staff

K-4 Faculty

and Staff

Discriminatory Grading Practices: Online Survey

• Potentially Discriminatory Grading Practices Identified by Junior High School Faculty and Staff

- Unfair for grades to based on homework and work done outside of the classroom (4)
- Not providing appropriate modifications or accommodations (3)
- Unfair for retakes to only be offered during zero hour (3)
- Unfair to not allow full credit for retakes (3)
- Unfair for homework to count as much as tests (2)
- Unfair to limit the number of times a student can take a test (1)
- Unfair to require students to jump through hoops prior to retaking a test (1)
- Unfair for grades to be based on physical ability (1)
- Unfair for grades to be based on participation (1)
- Unfair to not accept late work (2)
- Unfair to not grade students based upon mastery of content (1)
- Unfair to not use instructional strategies that engage a variety of students learning strengths (1)
- Unfair to grade for writing conventions in a non-writing class (1)

7-8 Faculty and Staff

Discriminatory Grading Practices: Online Survey

- Potentially Discriminatory Grading Practices Identified by High School Faculty and Staff
 - Unfair to grade based on homework and work done outside of the classroom (3)
 - Unfair to not provide appropriate modifications or accommodations (3)
 - Unfair to grade students based upon language proficiency (3)
 - Unfair when student assessments include culturally specific content (3)
 - Unfair to not use standards based grading (2)
 - Unfair to grade based on parent participation (1)
 - Unfair to grade students based on their sex or other individual characteristic (1)
 - Unfair for changes to be made to grades based upon pressure coming from parents or coaches (1)
 - Unfair for grades to be based on attendance (1)
 - Unfair for grades to be based on behavior (1)
 - Unfair for grades to be based on completion of assignments (1)
 - Unfair for grades to include student effort (1)
 - Unfair for retakes to only be offered during zero hour or after school (1)
 - Unfair for teachers to make exceptions only for students who request them (1)
 - Unfair for there to be inconsistencies in grading practices between teachers of the same grade level and content area (1)
 - Unfair to grade students based upon how much teachers like them (1)
 - Unfair for late work to be penalized (1)
 - Unfair to not allow full credit for missing work (1)
 - Unfair when completing an assignment requires technology (1)
 - Unfair to use high stakes standardized testing to determine graduation outcomes (1)

9-12 Faculty and Staff

Discriminatory Grading Practices: Focus Groups and Interviews

• Potentially Discriminatory Grading Practices Identified by Students during Focus Groups

- Teachers give preferential treatment to other students (7)
- Heavy emphasis on testing (4)
- Don't have access to the book at home (2)
- Expectations weren't clearly laid out in the beginning of the class (1)
- Tests don't reflect the material we learn in class (1)
- Unfair late work policies (1)
- Unfair attendance policies (1)

Students

Parents

- Potentially Discriminatory Grading Practices Identified by Parents during Focus Group
 - Inconsistencies within and across departments and grade levels (4)
 - Preferential treatment is given to particular students (2)

Discriminatory Grading Practices: Focus Groups and Interviews

• Potentially Discriminatory Grading Practices Identified by Teachers during Focus Groups and Interviews

- Inconsistencies within and across departments and grade levels (3)
- There is a disconnect between what the teachers want and what the administration wants (2)
- Unfair late work policies (2)
- Unfair for PE to grade based on physical performance (2)
- Unfair to grade based on attendance (1)
- Unfair to grade based on homework (1)
- The assessment process is bias towards native English speakers (1)
- Unfair to hold students on IEP's to the same standards as those who are not (1)
- Special Education uses a subjective grading system (1)
- The text books and curriculums are culturally bias and insensitive (1)
- Potentially Discriminatory Grading Practices Identified by Administrators during Focus Groups and Interviews
 - Unfair to offer bonus points for parent participation (4)
 - Unfair to grade homework (3)
 - Unfair to grade for non-academic related items (2)
 - Unfair to offer extra credit (2)
 - Unfair to grade based on attendance (1)
 - Unfair to grade based upon effort (1)
 - Grading practices are bias against students who are Latino (1)
 - Very little diversity training (1)
 - Unclear grading practices for students with disabilities (1)
 - No consistent practices related to alternative assessment (1)
 - Unfair to grade on items that require access to technology at home (1)

Teachers

Administrators

RECOMMENDATIONS.



Recommendation 1:

Grade only items that measure students proficiency or mastery in a given subject



Recommendation 2:

Grade items that measure more than just a students proficiency or mastery in a given subject



Recommendation 3:

Address inconsistencies in grading within and across schools, departments and grade levels



Recommendation 4:

Increase cultural competency within the district to prevent discrimination and promote diversity



Watch your thoughts; they become words. Watch your words; they become actions. Watch your actions; they become habits. Watch your habits; they become character. Watch your character; it becomes your destiny. Frank Outlaw



Recommendation 5:

Provide better instructional and assessment support for English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities



THANK YOU.