

East Haddam Public Schools

Brian S. Reas, Superintendent of Schools

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May 5, 2020

Dear Families and Educators,

The pandemic is causing a variety of challenges for our students, our staff, and our families. During normal times, the public school buildings, the technology, the resources that surround students when they enter the classrooms are equitably distributed throughout the schools for our students. The staff provide a caring and nurturing environment to all of our students. In addition, we have support services of all kinds to help students grow and learn. The result of these school time conditions set a level playing field for our students.

Distance learning successes in our district are a direct result of many caring educators pushing any apprehensions aside and leaping into this new medium for teaching and learning. Students and families have committed their time and attention to education to make many successes happen. At the same time, the equities that we ensure when students enter the buildings have been significantly disrupted. We just do not know the degree or the impact of this disruption. For this reason, it is simply not okay to continue with the same grading system. The result of inaction would be to enable the pandemic to harm our students for conditions outside their control. We are implored to make a shift in our practices to counter the effects of these conditions.

We also know that setting expectations for students is extremely important for student success in learning and success in developing skills that will support them to become responsible adults. Our system must maintain a high level of expectations for our students.

The task upon us is to balance a commitment to shield students from pandemic borne harm and continue high expectations for students. Please find the following guidance to execute this task.

Elementary School

The standards-based grading at the elementary school will continue similar to the normal system. We anticipate that distance learning will not afford us the opportunity to assess student mastery of standards at the same level as we can when students are in the classroom. In the event that the teacher does not have enough information to be able to comment on or rate the level of mastery on any particular standard on the report card, the student will receive a designation of "Not Assessed" or NA for that standard. The fall administration of the annual assessment systems (Aimsweb, Iready) at the elementary school will identify necessary adjustments to instruction to support students who demonstrate a need for continued instruction towards the particular standard(s).

Middle School

Grade 4

The standards-based grading in grades 4 will continue similar to the normal system. In the event that the teacher does not have enough information to be able to comment on or rate the level of mastery on any standard, the student will receive a designation of 'Not Assessed' or NA for that standard. The annual assessment system administered in the fall will assess all students and instructional adjustments will be made to support students who demonstrate a need for continued instruction toward progress in the particular standard(s).

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Letter grades will be assigned as they normally are for those subject areas that note these grades. Students will have opportunities to complete work when necessary.

Grades 5-8

Students will receive letter grades for the 3rd and final trimester. Students are expected to put forth as much effort as possible to complete their assignments.

For students struggling in one or more subjects:

- On or by June 1, students will be notified if their grade is either below where their second trimester grade was or if currently at a D or F level.
- Students will be offered the opportunity to make a plan to complete assignments that will support them to receive a grade equivalent to their second trimester grade of the 2019-2020 school year.
- Parents may request by June 5th, an extension for their student to continue completing assignments until June 30, 2020.
- In most cases, students will receive a letter grade on June 15. Students using the additional time will receive a letter grade on July 1.

High School

Grades 9-12

Students will receive letter grades for the 4th quarter. Students are expected to put forth as much effort as possible to complete their assignments.

For students struggling in one or more subjects:

- By June 1, students (May 22 for seniors) will be notified if their 4th quarter grade is a full letter grade below their third quarter grade (i.e. went from a B- to a C-) or they are currently at a D or F level.
- The notified students will have the opportunity to make a plan that will support them to receive a grade equivalent to their 2020 third quarter grade.
- Parents may request by June 5, an extension for their student to continue completing assignments until June 30, 2020.
- After exhausting all opportunities to complete assignments, including those described above, students may request to receive a pass/fail grade for the final semester. Pass/fail will only be available for students that demonstrate a pandemic related hardship that prevented them from completing their assignment. A review committee of teachers, counselors and administrators will confidentially review hardship requests.
- Grade Point Averages (GPA's) will be calculated as they normally are. Students receiving a pass/fail will have their GPA calculated on the basis of the first three quarters only.

College Applications:

At the time of this letter, 50 states have declared a state of emergency at the same time for the first time in the country's history. Grading will be handled in a variety of different ways throughout the state and country. Colleges have acknowledged that they will be forced to look at the spring semester of 2020 differently than any other semester they have ever considered as a result of the pandemic. Colleges indicate that they will accept Pass/Fail grades with the caveat that they will ask students and their academic advisors/teachers to share how the Pass/Fail was acquired. This is important for students to understand. Pass/fail is a safety net for students that have a hardship and need this support during this unique situation. We encourage students in this set of circumstances not to create an awkward conversation with future post-secondary education leaders or employers that do not need to exist.

Special Needs:

Students receiving services through Individual Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 plans continue to receive services and accommodations to the greatest extent possible during this time of distance learning. If you have questions about how the guidance in this document applies to specific accommodations, please contact your child's case manager.

Grading and Reporting of Progress is a complex and challenging process when everything is going according to plan. With this "new normal", we believe that we have found a balance of maintaining expectations for students, communicating progress to students and parents, and reporting learning outcomes. While this system is not perfect, it is designed to protect students from the potential harm of the school closure and facilitates communication among educators and families.

Thank you for all of your patience and collaboration.

A note to students:

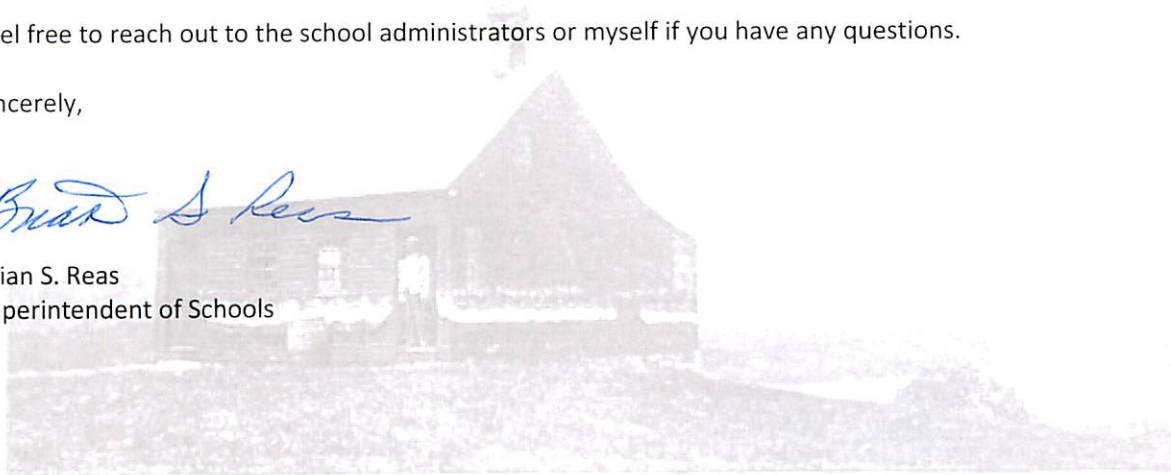
Our goal is your success! We want you to be in the best place possible considering the circumstances and situations you are facing. If as you read this document and realize that you have made assumptions about grading for the last session of the 19/20 year that were not correct, please do not fret. Rather, call your school counselor or administrator and we will support you to set you back on the right path. Please call on or before May 8 to make any plans for work that was due before May 1, 2020.

Feel free to reach out to the school administrators or myself if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Brian S. Reas
Superintendent of Schools



THE NATHAN HALE SCHOOL HOUSE.