Dear School Community,

On Monday, March 16th, pursuant to the Governor’s executive order to close schools, Kingsway Regional Middle and High Schools abruptly transitioned from a traditional school environment to our present virtual learning program in response to the current coronavirus pandemic. This transition, which was expected to last two-weeks, has been extended through the end of the school year.

**Current Grading Policies & Need for Modification**

Despite a number of challenges, we are proud to have maintained the teaching and learning process in these difficult and unprecedented circumstances. We have built a separate and sustainable virtual school in what seems to be an instant. Our success is the result of our dedicated teachers who have creatively delivered lessons and our diligent students who have worked hard to maintain high levels of engagement. However, we cannot ignore that our current and traditional grading policy highlights a host of inequities in this virtual environment. As school leaders and student caretakers, we must modify our current policies within this new environment to: (1) ensure maximum flexibility to meet individual student needs; (2) best reflect student learning and academic progression; (3) offset variables that may hinder student performance; and, (4) prevent the negative cumulative effects our traditional grading policy may have on reporting outcomes.

**Reasons for Modification**

There are many variables school officials must consider at this moment in relation to our current grading policies. These variables include, but are not limited to: (1) the social and emotional impact the pandemic has had on every student; (2) the ability for students to reliably connect to virtual instruction; (3) academic integrity within a virtual environment; (4) unequal levels of home support for students; and, (5) unfamiliar responsibilities students have been assigned to navigate this new learning environment. Simply put, there are far too many variables preventing fair and equitable assessment of student performance in relation to our current grading policies. Moreover, we recognize the impact grading in this environment will have on a high school student’s overall grade point average (GPA), which will undoubtedly impact the college application process.

In summary, we do not want the present circumstances and variables to negatively impact each one of our 2,806 middle and high school students’ current and future success. We must ensure that grading policies in our current virtual learning environment reflect the present moment without unfairly penalizing students.

**Kingsway Shifts to a Modified Pass/Fail Policy**

Kingsway is prepared to transition our current grading policy to a modified pass/fail system for Semester 2. This alternative to our current grading policy will only apply to Semester 2 grades. Final grades will be computed by averaging Semester 1 (S1) and Semester 2 (S2) grades to calculate the final Year 1 (Y1) grade. In doing so, we aim to maximize student learning while minimizing the extraordinary pressure grades and subsequent grade point average calculations have on students in this environment while compensating for factors that may potentially hinder student success.

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**Numerical Value Equivalents**

A traditional pass/fail grading scheme would allow students to earn credit for a particular course but would not be factored into the cumulative grade point average (GPA). It has been reported that many colleges have moved to this binary scheme in response to the coronavirus pandemic but have drawn criticism from students looking to apply to graduate and medical schools or to transition from community colleges to four-year universities, where the letter grade, and subsequent GPA, matters.

Our high school students face a similar predicament in that the cumulative GPA has been emphasized as the most important factor in admission decisions for first-time college freshman (National Association of College Admission Counseling’s [2019 State of College Admission Report](#)). If we opt for a traditional pass/fail option for S2 grades, without applying a numerical value, Y1 grades would be equal to the S1 grade. While this may benefit some students, it may harm others who performed below expectations and/or their individual potential during the first semester.

Underscoring our need to include numerical values for S2 grades are the growing reports that many colleges are eliminating the SAT or ACT test for freshmen entering school in the fall 2021 due to the lack of available testing opportunities as a result of the pandemic. This movement away from the SAT or ACT will shift a greater importance on our students’ cumulative GPA, especially for our juniors who are just a few months away from starting the college application process.

Moreover, lack of S2 grades and subsequent impact on Y1 grades, will impact high school students who are presently taking courses recognized by our [Dual Credit/High School Plus Program](#). Students in this program must earn the equivalent of an A or a B to receive three (3) college credits at Camden County College (CCC). This year, Kingsway Regional High School students are pursuing 372 dual credit courses and paid $55,800 in tuition fees.

Lastly, we cannot ignore the impact cumulative GPAs and Y1 grades will have on NCAA requirements for students who hope to pursue post-high school athletics, athletic and academic scholarships, and local scholarships such as the NJ STARS Program for the top 15 percent of graduating seniors and the Presidential Start Smart Scholarship for qualifying first-year college students.

For the aforementioned reasons, Kingsway will assign a numerical value equivalent to the pass/fail grading scheme, for S2 grades only, to be used to compute Y1 grades. The [Provisional Grading Policy](#) Table on page three illustrates this point and assigns the corresponding numerical value of a 92 or higher for a passing grade and a 64 for a failing grade.

**Calculating Final Grades and Grade Point Averages**

Final Year 1 (Y1) Grades are computed by averaging Semester 1 (S1) and Semester 2 (S2) grades in the middle and high school. For example, if a student earned an 88 in Science during S1 and earns a “pass” (P) in S2, and the numerical value equivalent (NVE) assigned is a 92, the Y1 Grade would be computed as the average of the 88 and 92, which equals a 90. The GPA is a measurement that reflects a pupil’s cumulative final grade. For the purpose of determining final grades, the same approach as defined in [Policy S430 Grade Point Average](#) will be utilized.
## Provisional Grading Policy Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Numerical Value Equivalent</th>
<th>Proficiency Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P (pass)</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>Students who engage routinely, complete assignments, and reflect on feedback provided by the teacher will receive a “P” for Semester Two (S2). The numerical value equivalent used will be a 92 for the purpose of computing Y1 grades and cumulative GPA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P (pass)</td>
<td>93 and above</td>
<td>Students who engage routinely, complete assignments, and reflect on feedback provided by the teacher will receive a “P” for Semester Two (S2). If a student earned a grade higher than a 92 in S2, the higher grade will be recorded as the numerical value equivalent to be used for the purpose of computing Y1 grades and cumulative GPA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F (fail)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Students who do not engage in the virtual learning process nor participate in virtual instruction, and fail to complete assignments will receive a “F” for Semester Two (S2). The numerical value equivalent will be a 64 for the purpose of determining Y1 grades and cumulative GPA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I (incomplete)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from completing/participating in work assigned during the virtual learning period, an “I” will be recorded for the S2 grade. In this case, the student will have the opportunity to complete the work at a later date and then earn a recorded “P” or “F” for S2 as described above.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for your patience and understanding throughout this time. You can find frequently asked questions on the following page. However, should you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at your convenience.

Very truly yours,

[Signature]

Dr. James J. Lavender
Superintendent of Schools

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS?

Q: Will Honors and AP courses still be weighted?
A: Yes. This interim shift to a modified pass/fail system will continue to incorporate a weighted option, so that we consider a course’s rigor, such as with honors and Advanced Placement (AP).

Q: Will Class Rank still be calculated for the Class of 2020?
A: Yes. Year 1 Grades will be factored into the calculation to compute cumulative GPAs, which will be used to determine class rank for the senior members of the Class of 2020.

Q: Will this temporary grading policy carry into the 2020-21 School Year?
A: No. Kingsway has adopted a new grading policy, which will begin with the start of the 2020-21 School year. To learn more about those changes, click HERE.

Q: Why not just use Pass/Fail without adding numerical values?
A: We considered this but recognize that high school students need numerical values to calculate cumulative GPAs. Eliminating numerical values, especially for students who achieve high grades, will be detrimental to them in the long run. More detailed information on this can be found in the narrative within this document.

Q: Why are some students, who would ordinarily earn lower grades, be awarded a numerical value of a 92?
A: We have countless stories of students who may have started any given school year slowly, with lower grades, to only achieve high grades during the second semester. However, our present environment does not provide that same opportunity. Rather than ignore the varying circumstances, and unrelenting factors that may hinder student academic success, we prefer to hold these students harmless in the present environment. Moreover, the Provisional Pass/Fail Grading Policy applies only to S2 grades and Y1 grades will be computed by averaging S1 and S2 grades. As an example, suppose a student earned a 76 in S1 grade and a 92 in S2. When we average S1 and S2 the student would then earn an 84 for his/her Y1 grade.

Q: What other measures have you applied to help ensure fair and equitable student grading occurs.
A: Since the abrupt transition to our present virtual learning program, school officials have been focused on implementing measures to help ensure that our students are not unfairly penalized for the unprecedented circumstances in which we operate. Those measures include the following:

- We suspended the use of primary assessments and common summative assessments (CSAs), which accounted for 50 percent of a student’s grade. We did this knowing we could not conduct assessments in our virtual environment with any degree of confidence. Instead, we have continued the use of supportive and secondary assessments as a means of measuring student performance while encouraging academic growth.
- We have continued our reassessment practice for secondary assessments in an effort to focus on the learning process by providing students with every opportunity to reflect on teacher feedback and take assessments a second time.
- We exempted missing assignments for students who faced make-up work while we were in our traditional system (Feb. 3rd to Mar. 13th). PowerSchool grades should be reflected as an “Ex” for these assignments, which will not count against a student’s S2 grade. We did this in an effort to alleviate the burden placed on students who are navigating our virtual environment while resolving, in some cases, considerable amount of make-up.
work. We do not believe, in these circumstances, the “burying” a student with “make-up” work would be in the best interest of any student’s academic performance and/or well-being.

- We extended the period for students to make-up missing assignments, which were assigned after we transitioned to our virtual learning program, to Monday, April 20th. Students who completed all missing work were given full credit.
- We are presently investigating options to re-calibrate our grading categories for S2 and testing to ensure that this measure benefits our students.