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Education Service Center

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## Re: Proficiency Based Education “Think Tank” Modifications

Dear Parents and Guardians,

On Wednesday, February 5, a group of high school teachers from Fort Kent Community High School, Madawaska Middle/High School, Wisdom Middle/High School, and the St. John Valley Technology Center met to discuss our proficiency based education system and to propose some modifications that will continue to assist learners specific to goals and objectives, but also to help with student accountability and differentiating academic achievement. This “PBE Think Tank” was in response to some teacher, parent, and student concerns that needed to be addressed.

The goal of the PBE Think Tank was not to throw out everything our teachers have been working on over the past 6-7 years. It was a goal, however, to make adjustments to improve the system, while continuing on with those valuable PBE principles, specific to performance indicators, learning targets, assessment practices, learning environments, and habits of work among others. The focus of this first round of improvements was to modify our PBE system of standards based grading to adopt some more traditional practices.

As a result of this work the following changes are immediately going into effect for the second semester for students in grades 9-12 at CHS, MMHS, WMHS and SJVTC. (Note: At this time, these changes **do not** impact the current practices for PreK-8):

1. **All performance indicators (standards) in a course will be averaged for one overall course score.** Explanation: Currently, each standard is counted separately, and not specific to a course, which makes it difficult to determine if a student has earned a credit for the course. Additionally, the averaging of course standards will help differentiate student performances in each specific course. Course scores will also be averaged for overall Grade Point Average. (See attached example.)
2. **The minimum final course score for a student to earn a credit may not be lower than 2.5. Any final course scores below 2.5 will require remediation, such as summer school or vacation school.** Explanation: Some students will reach a proficiency level in some standards within a course, but not reach proficiency in others to match their strengths and weaknesses; therefore, a threshold of 2.5 has been set to earn course credit. (IEP students may have alternate requirements per determinations of the IEP Team.)

3. **In addition to the 4-point scale for scoring, a zero (0) will be utilized when students chose not to demonstrate evidence on assessments or for those who miss due dates on assessments.** (Missing homework assignments will continue to be coded with an M.)  
Explanation: Many students currently feel that due dates are suggestive, and that they can provide evidence when they are ready, even when the teacher has asked for specific due dates to be upheld. The use of zero (0) will help to hold students accountable to important due dates.
  
4. **Students will be given 10-days to make a plan with their teacher to attempt to “upgrade” any assessment. After 10-days, the original score will be the final score, until a remediation period (summer school or vacation school) has been assigned, if applicable.** Example: The past theory of a student able to take an assessment over and over until they can pass it does not help with student accountability. The 10-day window will provide some opportunities for test retakes, but beyond that, the score will remain as what the student has demonstrated.

Attached to this letter is an example of how the course score will be averaged. Additionally, there is a Q&A section that has come from questions that teachers have asked regarding this change. We hope this information is helpful. Additionally, all teachers will be speaking to the learners about the changes and how it impacts their classes.

In the upcoming weeks, your building administrator will be sending out invitations for a presentation of this information, where parents and learners can ask questions about these changes. We thank you for your support as we work to provide the best education experience for all learners as we move forward with our future-ready vision.

Respectfully,



Benjamin Sirois

## Example of Sophomore Year English Language Arts Course Score Calculation

2.5	<b>(GR) HS.RCB.4:</b> ***Learners read and comprehend fiction and non-fiction texts at a career and college-readiness level, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
3.0	<b>GR.HS.WA.1:</b> ***Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
3.0	<b>GR.HS.WIN.1:</b> ***Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
2.5	<b>GR.HS.WP.2:</b> ***Learner can demonstrate command of the conventions and construction of standard English grammar and usage when writing.
3.5	<b>GR.HS.WP.4:</b> ***Learners acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.
2.5	<b>GR.HS.WR.2:</b> ***Learner can integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and over reliance on any one source and following a standard form of citation.
3.0	<b>GR.HS.WRB.3:</b> ***Learner can draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection and research, integrating information from diverse sources into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies and agreement among sources; assessing the usefulness of each source and answering the research question.
2.5	<b>HS.RCA.1:</b> Learner can determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
3.5	<b>HS.RCA.2:</b> Learner can analyze how complex characters (e.g. those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
4.0	<b>HS.RIB.1:</b> Learner can identify evidence that most strongly shows understanding of both explicit meaning and major inferences. Can determine where the text leaves matters uncertain.
2.5	<b>HS.WP.3:</b> Learners use technology to produce, publish and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.
<b>2.95</b>	<b>Overall Course Score</b>

Question(s)	Response(s)
<p>I don't see any reference to minimum scores for content and graduation standards. A minimum threshold of a 2.5 (Content) and 3.0 (Graduation) had been previously set to determine whether a student "passed" the course to which those standards were attached. Does the new grading scheme nullify this previous requirement?</p>	<p>There will no longer be any standards identified at "graduation standards". All standards will be equal in weight to determine the overall course score.</p>
<p>What will the PK-8 grades be doing? Will there be a similar move in that direction?</p>	<p>These changes were implemented by 9-12 teachers and only impact 9-12. Determinations about PreK-8 education would have to be decided by PreK-8 staff.</p>
<p>With regards to the 10 day period to complete work. Does that mean they just hand it in within 10 days of the original due date? Do we accept it as is, even if it is not proficient?</p>	<p>The 10 day period was identified as the only time allowed for a student to improve on a summative they have turned in, and to avoid the end of the ranking period nightmare we currently face, where a large percentage of students wait until the very end to turn in summative work. With this change, if a student misses the due date, they would be assigned a 0 and would have 10 days to submit the work to receive something more than that 0. The same is true if a student received a 2 and would like to attempt another summative for a 3.....or a student that received a 3 and wants to attempt a 4. Beyond the 10 days the window for improvement is closed. That means no more turning in of work at the end of the ranking period for the hopes of not passing a class.</p> <p>If a student attempts to demonstrate work within the 10 day window, and the work is not better than the first attempt, it is up to teacher discretion to acknowledge the work or not.</p>
<p>Did the PBE Think Tank work change anything with respect to the level 4 work?</p>	<p>Teachers are encouraged to have conversations with their learners about the opportunities they have to go beyond a level 3 for proficiency. In averaging the course standards to one final score, learners should work to attempt level 3.5 and 4.0 work to increase their final average and to deepen the learning experiences!</p>

<p>Is this average generated off the gradebook and all summative assessments to create one final average? Or does it take ONLY what we put in the "score standards".</p>	<p>We will be averaging course standards, not an average of your summative assessments. The goal was not to create a new spin on traditional grading, but we were mindful that asking all students to be proficient on all graduation standards without the ability to be stronger in some than others was an issue we wanted to address. Teachers will have to be mindful about updating score standards.</p>
<p>Are moving away from PBE to a hybrid?</p>	<p>The Maine Department of Education’s Vision for PBE included the attainment and awarding of a PBE diploma. Our concern is that moving away from the credit based system to a full PBE diploma, which is the attainment of Proficiency in all 8 content standards for all graduation requirements, will be unachievable for many students, including our IEP learners. It is therefore the thought of the PBE Think Tank members to keep those PBE concepts that are a benefit to student learning, including clear goals and performance indicators, authentic/varied assessment practices, student voice and choice, flexible learning environments, separation of work habits and academic abilities, and a clear correlation of student scores to goals.</p>
<p>I am confused with having to have a "punishment" for students with the ZERO.</p>	<p>The zero is not, and was not, discussed as a punishment, and may not be utilized in any way other than for a summative assessment when a learner has chosen to not demonstrate proficiency. The zero literally means, “No demonstration”. This is never to be used for practice work (homework, classwork, etc) or for formative checks. As we have done to date, a learner who attempts to demonstrate proficiency on a summative assessment, and needs assistance to do so, will be scored a 1 or 2 based on the demonstration level. Again, the zero is only to be used for “No Demonstration”, as an accountability measure.</p>
<p>When does this go into effect?</p>	<p>We will be sending out the “PBE Modifications” letter to parents prior to the February break. In the letter, we will let parents and learners know that the new procedures go into effect immediately, and that upon return from February break, any missing summative assessments will start the 10-day countdown for a learner to update their assessment score.</p> <p>Teachers should begin having these discussions with their 9-12 grade learners immediately.</p>