



**Mascoutah**

*Community Unit School District #19*

622 South Jefferson Street  
Mascoutah, IL 62258-1128

## GRADING SCALE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

**Date & Time:** April 25, 2013 at 6:30 PM

**Location:** Mascoutah Middle School Library

**Members Present:** Susanne Riechmann, Randy Blakely, Kyle Freeman, Karen Mulvihill, Pat Day, Kelly Caterino, Tammy Cox, Cindy Doil, Nancy Seibert, Jordan Rasch, Sandy Jougard, Chris Lindsay, Lee Piner, Marsha Ray, Monica Lynch, Robert Pearson, Craig Fiegel, Alana Fanous, Katie Nelson, Jennifer Richter

**Absent:** Ron Hulliung, Robert Pearson

### Welcome

Dr. Freeman welcomed everyone and explained the agenda for the evening.

### Sub-Committee Reports

#### *Sub-Committee Review and Discussion*

Sub-committees were given five minutes to discuss their research within each group prior to reporting.

#### *Sub-Committee Reports*

Mrs. Doil and Mrs. Cox discussed what they found over the course of their literature review. Mrs. Doil described how the Fairfax County Study was almost the same study that we are currently undertaking. She explained that within the study there was information showing that 55% of the colleges polled did not recalculate GPA's, most of the schools researched utilized a ten-point scale, much of the anecdotal information suggested that there was a perception that the more restrictive six-point scale was punitive for students trying to enroll and receive scholarships at the university level, and the schools researched for the study either had a ten-point scale or were moving toward a ten-point scale.

Dr. Freeman and Mrs. Riechmann reported on the findings of their comparison with the other top unit districts in the area and state of Illinois. They completed gathering information regarding the number of students enrolled in Freshman Honors English when compared against the enrollment for the entire freshman class. They noted that the freshmen enrolled in Honors English in Mascoutah made up about 9% of the class, while the average seemed to be above 25% in most other schools. They mentioned that some schools had been aggressively moving students into Honors English due to the higher level of rigor in those classes and the impact on

student assessments. Both Dr. Freeman and Mrs. Riechmann also mentioned that the majority of the schools surveyed offered weighted grades in their Honors and AP programs.

The survey committee reported on the survey process and findings. The student survey had responses from over three hundred Junior and Senior students at the high school. Two hundred six teachers from the Mascoutah School District responded to the teacher survey, and almost seven hundred parents and community members responded to the parent/community member survey. The initial survey window for parents opened on 4/8 and closed on 4/12. Due to a large number of requests to take the survey from parents working at Scott Air Force Base, the survey was re-opened on 4/16 and closed on 4/19 (with over one hundred new responses coming in at that time). The committee was very satisfied with the amount of participation from stake holders in the district.

Mrs. Seibert discussed that there were many comments from teachers, students, and especially parents (over 73 pages of parent comments alone). She did not include the comment sheets on the internet posting due to the size of the documents, but stated that she had copies of the comments with her if any of the committee members wanted to peruse the comment sheets. There was some discussion from committee members who were curious if the comments could be e-mailed out to the entire committee. The district stated that they would try to e-mail the information provided the files were not too large for the e-mail server.

Mr. Day outlined some of the comments from the parent and teacher surveys. He mentioned that there were a large number of people who felt that the current six-point scale was restrictive and punitive to students. He also mentioned that there were a number of commenters who felt the current scale was challenging to students, and some who felt an eight-point scale would be a good compromise. It appeared to Mr. Day that a large portion of the responders wanted to see the district change to a ten-point scale.

Mr. Piner briefly discussed some follow-up information that he wanted to add to his report from the last meeting. He stated that he had discussed the topic of adjusting for the grading scale with the nine teachers who currently teach honors and AP courses at Mascoutah High School. Seven of the nine teachers adjusted their grades, and two did not.

Dr. Freeman thanked the sub-committees for all their hard work and asked if anyone wanted to add anything to any of the reports. There were no additions.

## **Discussion of the Findings**

### *Open Discussion of Sub-Committee Findings*

Dr. Freeman mentioned that there was much information gathered and that most of the information pertained to the high school. He stated that he felt it was the duty of the committee to have a discussion on possible impact to the elementary and middle schools in the district.

The committee began to discuss the implications of the current grading scale on middle and elementary students. There were committee members who felt that the current scale had pushed students to succeed, some who felt that it caused students to settle for lower grades, and others that felt the current scale had little impact on student achievement. A question was posed regarding the possibility of providing two separate scales (a less restrictive scale at the high school level, and more restrictive at the elementary level). The response from district

administrators was that a split grading scale would complicate the issue and cause more confusion for students and parents. The committee agreed to recommend one grading scale to be utilized throughout the district.

Experiences were relayed regarding the impact of the grading scale on both high and lower achieving students in the elementary and middle school levels. The committee discussed the implications on lower achieving students. The administrators from MES, SES, and MMS were asked how many students, on average, have been retained in each building annually. Mr. Blakely stated that MES usually retains 1 or 2 students per year as compared to a population of around 1,000 students. Mrs. Mulvihill stated that MMS only retains about 1 student per year out of a population of around 750 students. Mrs. Reichmann mentioned that due to the larger number of transfers in their building the numbers at SES are a little larger. Around 4 to 5 students are retained per year at SES out of a population of 850 students.

Rigor was next topic of discussion for the committee. It was stated that rigor is not the result of a grading scale, but the result of the expectations of the classroom teacher. Teachers who have high standards may adjust any scale in order to provide opportunities for all students to succeed in the classroom.

A discussion regarding the perceived impact of the current six-point scale was discussed. There seemed to be a general perception within the community, student body, and to some extent the committee, regarding the implications of the grading scale. Many of the teachers in the room stated that they felt the six-point grading scale gave the perception that students were restricted academically and if the perception changed with a ten-point scale, it would be worthwhile to make the change. A discussion ensued regarding the subjective nature of grades. Teachers should know what A, B, C, etc. work looks like and the grading scale should merely provide a way to measure that work numerically.

It was determined that there were two points on the table that needed to be decided: 1) Do we need to change the scale? 2) What should the new, if any, scale be (i.e. 10 pt., 8 pt., 6 pt., etc.)? A handout with five different scales was handed out to serve as a reference. There was discussion on which scale would work best for the students in Mascoutah.

Mr. Piner pointed out that the information contained in the student survey suggests that MHS students are not always applying for scholarships and that may be one of the causes for students not receiving scholarships. There was some discussion on competitive scholarships and those provided to all students who qualify.

## **Next Steps**

### *First Poll of the Committee*

Dr. Freeman handed out ballots and a secret ballot poll was taken. The committee was asked to determine if the grading scale needs to change, or should the current grading scale remain in place.

The committee voted unanimously to change the grading scale.

### *Discussion Resulting from the Poll*

The results of the first poll were presented to the committee. It was then decided to discuss possible changes to the grading scale. It was mentioned that several staff members suggested using an eight-point scale as a compromise. The committee discussed the eight-point option, ten-point option, and other potential grading scales.

### *Second Poll of the Committee*

Dr. Freeman handed out ballots and a secret ballot poll was taken. The committee was asked to give their personal recommendation on what scale should be adopted by the district. Twelve people voted to change to the ten-point scale, four people voted to change to an eight-point scale, and one person voted to change to a modified ten-point.

### *Discussion Resulting from the Poll*

The results of the second poll were presented to the committee.

There was some discussion regarding the modified ten-point scale and the committee decided not to recommend that scale. A discussion regarding the eight-point scale ensued, and a couple committee members that voted for the eight-point scale mentioned that they were not “stuck” in their position.

Dr. Freeman stated that he had his vote withheld in case there were a tie, and he had his vote read (adopt a ten-point). At that point the committee decided that they would recommend that the Board of Education adopt a ten-point scale.

### *Where Do We Go From Here*

Once the committee agreed on a recommendation, it was decided that the administration would put together a draft of the recommendation to be reviewed at one more meeting. The goal would be to get the recommendation before the Board at the Board of Education meeting scheduled for May 21.

Dr. Freeman stated that he would send out a draft of the recommendation for the committee to see during the week of April 29.

The committee will discuss the final recommendation, the wording of the recommendation to the Board of Education, and the presentation of the recommendation at the Board Meeting.

### **Announcement of Future Meeting(s)**

The next meeting will be conducted on May 7<sup>th</sup>, at 6:30 PM in the Middle School Library.

### **Adjournment**