



**Brunswick School Department
BJHS & BHS Pass/Fail Guidance**

April 15, 2020

Why has the Brunswick School Department decided to use a Pass/Fail system to grade junior high and high school students during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Our community is currently faced with an unprecedented situation. COVID-19 has caused a disruption to our global economy, significant job loss, serious health issues and concern for the safety of loved ones. Teaching and learning look different during this period of time because the focus needs to be on the social and emotional well being of our students. While attending school in person, students have access to services such as social, emotional support, mental health support and academic support services. Remote learning does not provide the same opportunities for our students to obtain the support they rely on to learn and function. We decided to adjust grading to accommodate for these differences.

The Maine Curriculum Leaders Association (MCLA) recently released guidance on grading based on culturally responsive teaching and learning. Guidance is based on the Crescendo Education Group's research that focused on multiple geographic and socioeconomic contexts, which presumes that:

1. Stress related to COVID-19 will negatively impact student academic performance.
2. Student academic performance during school closures is more likely to reflect racial, economic, and resource differences.
3. Teachers are being asked to provide high-quality instruction remotely, for which most are inadequately prepared.

Research supports the impact of non-graded feedback to focus students on

learning rather than performance,¹ and when the psychological and intellectual “load” on students and their families is so significant, it is important that schools lean on the side of support and learning rather than competition and high-stakes performance.

The Brunswick School Department (BSD), therefore, decided to use a Pass/Fail system third and fourth quarter for grades 6-8 and fourth quarter for grades 9-12. There will be no final exams in June for Brunswick Junior High School and Brunswick High School students.

How will students be assessed during the fourth quarter/course?

Teachers will use professional judgment to identify essential standards that students need to know and be able to do. Teachers are not able to cover the entire curriculum as outlined at the start of the year. We cannot guarantee that all students have the same opportunities or ability to engage in learning the same way they do when attending school in person.

Teachers will provide formative feedback to students that may be communicated through online meetings or web-based applications and will give students valuable insight into their understanding, guidance on how to improve, and motivation to learn and grow.

Teachers will use Power Teacher Pro Gradebook to monitor work completion. Students will receive a “Pass” for assignments that have been completed to a level of 60% or above.

What determines if a student receives a “Pass” for a BJHS course and credit for a BHS course?

A student should “Pass” a course if the student met academic standards for the first three quarters and engages in learning for the duration of the fourth quarter.

Any student who was not meeting minimum standards in the course prior to the fourth quarter, will be provided with opportunities to successfully meet essential standards remotely. The instruction of new skills and content will end two weeks

¹ Butler, R. & Mordecai, N. (1986). Effects of no feedback, task-related comments, and grades on intrinsic motivation and performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology* (78)3: 210.

prior to the end of the quarter to allow for remediation and extension. Students with an incomplete will have the opportunity to complete work during this two week period. Students who have completed all work will be provided with learning enrichment opportunities.

In order to receive a "Pass" for the course, students need to complete course requirements by the last academic day of the school year. Opportunities for standard remediation/credit recovery may be available during the summer.

We realize there may be circumstances (such as contracting COVID-19) that prevent a student from actively engaging in learning. Please contact your building principal to discuss extenuating circumstances.