



Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

TO: Members of the State Board of Education
FROM: Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.
DATE: April 28, 2020
SUBJECT: Request for a Waiver Related to COMAR 13A.03.02.08 *Grading and Reporting*

PURPOSE:

To review a waiver request from the Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM) related to grade change requirements included in COMAR 13A.03.02.08 *Grading and Reporting*.

BACKGROUND/HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:

COMAR 13A.03.02.08 *Grading and Reporting* requires each local school system to develop a policy of grading and reporting that complies with the COMAR regulation. Contained in the regulation is a requirement that the local policy include grade change procedures that are described in COMAR 13A.03.02.08B(5) and C. The regulation requires: "a timeline for final grade changes that cannot exceed 45 school days following the last day of the grading period. For a change of grade for the fourth marking period, the timeline would begin on the first day of school in the new school year." Additionally, the regulation requires: "On October 1 of each school year, each local school system shall: (1) File its policy on grading and reporting with the State Superintendent of Schools, and (2) Submit a copy of the grade change validity audit...to the State Superintendent of Schools."

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and state of emergency declared by Governor Larry Hogan, Maryland schools have been closed since March 16, 2020, and will be closed at least through May 15, 2020. The closures have impacted the general operation of schools and the implementation of procedures and policies established by COMAR and local school system policies and regulations. Given the implementation of distance learning, the commitment of teachers and school administrators to work with students, and the desire to give students as many opportunities as possible to complete work, the 24 local school superintendents have submitted a single waiver request on behalf of all 24 local school systems of the "45-day Grade Change Rule as required in COMAR 13A.02.02.08 *Grading and Reporting*." The superintendents are: "seeking the Board's approval to waive these grading change requirements until January 1, 2021, so we are able to more thoughtfully address the new grading policies and changes for the end of the school year that are still being determined by most local systems."

Members of the State Board of Education

April 28, 2020

Page 2

ACTION:

Request approval of the waiver request from the 24 local school superintendents for COMAR 13A.03.02.08 *Grading and Reporting*.

ATTACHMENT:

Letter from Dr. Karen M. Couch, Ed.D. President, PSSAM, dated April 21, 2020

Karen M. Couch, Ed.D.
President, PSSAM
Superintendent of Schools
Kent County Public Schools
5608 Boundary Avenue
Rock Hall, MD 21661
Phone: 443-778-7113
Fax: 410-778-2350
E-Mail: kcouch@kent.k12.md.us



April 21, 2020

Dr. Karen B. Salmon
State Superintendent
Maryland State Board of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201
Brigadier General Warner I. Sumpter, President
Maryland State Board of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

Sent via electronic mail only

Dear Dr. Salmon and General Warner,

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), representing all twenty-four (24) local school systems, seeks a statewide waiver of the 45-day Grade Change Rule as required in COMAR 13A.03.02.08 *Grading and Reporting* (attached in the Appendix).

Due to the closure of schools, traditional school practices have been upended and districts are adjusting marking period schedules and due dates. In all cases we are erring on the side of the student, and providing as many opportunities as possible to connect and work with students.

Students may be experiencing hardships during this time of distance learning and unable to complete needed work that would normally result in a grade change. They may be unable to access and submit assignments or they may need more time to work on assignments as traditional instructional supports are not in place. In some situations, attempts to communicate with students and families have been unsuccessful.

Under normal circumstances grade changes are initiated by the teacher and/or the student. Once the request process is started, the teacher makes a recommendation to the principal for a final decision. If approved, the high school registrar then makes the change in the student information system. With the extension of the school shutdown to May 15th, staff are not permitted in school

buildings and may not be able to obtain paperwork needed to complete earlier requests; therefore, extra time is needed.

For example, in one school system Marking Period 2, the 45-day period ended March 30. School buildings were closed to staff and students starting on March 16th and teachers were unable to submit grade change forms to principals. Additionally, school registrars could not access the various student information systems platforms or their school buildings during this time. For Marking Period 3, which ended on April 17th, there are less than 45-days of instruction left in the regular school year calendar (ending on June 15th). Under normal circumstances, the 45th day would extend into next school year.

Therefore, we are seeking the Board's approval to waive these grading change requirements until January 1, 2021 so we are able to more thoughtfully address the new grading policies and changes for the end of the school year that are still being determined by most local systems. In order to streamline this request, we are asking the State Board to consider this single request on behalf of all twenty-four school systems at their April 28, 2020 meeting.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact our Executive Director, Mary Pat Fannon at marypat.fannon@pssam.org or at 410-935-7281.

Thank you in advance for your help on this important request.

Sincerely,



Dr. Karen M. Couch
PSSAM President

Cc: Maryland Superintendents
Board Members, Maryland State Board of Education
Dr. Miya Simpson, Executive Director,
Office of the Maryland State Board of Education
Mary Pat, Executive Director, PSSAM

Appendix

COMAR 13A.03.02.08 Grading and Reporting

A. Each school system in Maryland shall recognize and accept any and all credits a student earned toward graduation in any other public school in Maryland.

B. Each local school system shall develop a written policy on grading and reporting that complies with the student record requirements as set forth in COMAR 13A.08.02 and that includes:

- (1) An explanation of the grading scale at the elementary and secondary levels;
- (2) An explanation of the calculation of the final grade for a course;
- (3) An explanation of weights of honors, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and/or dual enrollment courses;
- (4) An explanation of how attendance factors into the student's grade;
- (5) An explanation of grade changing procedures, including:
 - (a) A timeline for final grade changes that cannot exceed 45 school days following the last day of the grading period. For a change of grade for the fourth marking period, the timeline would begin on the first day of school in the new school year.
 - (b) The names of personnel at the school and central office level authorized to make final grade changes;
 - (c) Documentation that authorized personnel are required to maintain to support the final grade changes, including, at a minimum the:
 - (i) Name of teacher requesting grade change;
 - (ii) Reason for the grade change;
 - (iii) Signature of person approving the grade change;
 - (iv) Reason for the approval;
 - (v) Date of the approval; and
 - (vi) Signature of the principal;
 - (d) How and when the school system will audit the validity of the grade changes each year; and
 - (e) Appeal procedures.

C. On October 1 of each school year, each local school system shall:

- (1) File its policy on grading and reporting with State Superintendent of Schools; and
- (2) Submit a copy of the grade change validity audit in accordance with §B(5)(d) of this regulation to the State Superintendent of Schools.

D. Upon submission of the items contained in §C of this regulation, the Maryland State Department of Education will:

- (1) Verify that the local school system has met the requirements of this regulation; or
- (2) Direct the local school system to develop a corrective action plan to bring it into compliance with this regulation and monitor the school system's progress in completing its corrective action.