May 1, 2020

Dear Parents,

I am writing to clarify expectations for assignments and grading during the COVID-19 pandemic period. During my fourth Virtual Town Hall meeting, I spoke about students that are not logging in daily and the expectations for grades. Given that there may still be questions, I wanted to provide you with the same information that was shared with your child’s teacher.

First, let me say that we are fully sympathetic to the fact that Distance Learning is new for both staff and parents. In addition, we recognize that Distance Learning is not necessarily the best instructional model for all students. However, we are working diligently with teachers to ensure that they are supporting you and your child in the best possible way to be successful during this unprecedented time in history.

Below are guidelines that all Elementary and Secondary teachers are following for the rest of the school year:

**Elementary PK-5th Grade:**

- **Assignments** – Only 10 grades should be taken during the 24 days of Distance Learning. Teachers can provide more than 10 assignments, however, the required work must fit within the time expectations that have been provided. This affords students an opportunity to complete the assignments and to continue learning the curriculum.

- **Zero’s** – Students should be allowed to make up assignments prior to March 13th. Any student that has failed to turn in an assignment or received a "zero" for an assignment must be allowed to make this up. We want students to have every opportunity to improve their grades in all classes.

- **Student Grades** – There is an assumption that students are not doing their work because grades have been frozen as of March 13th. *This is NOT true.* Instruction is being provided through our Distance Learning Plan for students through May 8th and the expectation is they must complete the assignments and work that is provided.

- **Specials Classes (P.E., Music, Library, Dance, Art)** – Students are required to complete any assignments provided by their specials teachers. As stated, student grades *Are Not Frozen* and assignments must be completed in these courses.
Specials teachers should be providing assignments for students to complete and grades must be taken to receive credit.

- **PASS/FAIL Grades** – Pass/fail grades will only be provided to students in PK through 5th grades. I realize that this change may be difficult given that we provide grades for students in 2nd through 5th grade, but this is more of a competency-based plan. We want our students to understand and comprehend the concepts before moving to their next grade. If a student is in jeopardy of receiving a failing grade, the teacher MUST have the appropriate documentation to make this happen. More specifically, the following must occur:

  1) Direct communication both verbally and in writing with your principal explaining the reason for the failing grade as well as a written plan that details how you will help the student successfully complete their work.

  2) Written documentation of the dates and times that you contacted the student and/or family about the missing assignments and grade concerns. You must have documented the conversation. If no response to a phone call or email, documentation must also be provided.

  3) A written letter from the teacher to the parent must be mailed to the address provided to the school district. The letter must state the specific reason for the failing grade. It must also include a detailed log of contacts and missing assignments. A copy of this letter must go to the appropriate principal and counselor.

**Secondary Schools 6th-12th Grades:**

- **Assignments** – Only 10 grades should be taken during the 24 days of Distance Learning. Teachers can provide more than 10 assignments, however, the required work must fit within the time expectations that have been provided. This affords students an opportunity to complete the assignments and to continue learning the curriculum.

- **Zero’s** – Students should be allowed to make up assignments prior to March 13th. Any student that has failed to turn in an assignment or received a “zero” for an assignment must be allowed to make this up. We want students to have every opportunity to improve their grades in all classes.

- **Student Grades** – There is an assumption that students are not doing their work because grades have been frozen as of March 13th. This is NOT true. Instruction is being provided through our Distance Learning Plan for students through May 8th.
and the expectation is they must complete the assignments and work that is provided.

- **Elective Courses** – Students are required to complete any assignments provided by their elective teachers. As stated, student grades *Are Not Frozen* and assignments must be completed in these courses. Elective teachers should be providing assignments for students to complete and grades must be taken to receive credit.

- **Incomplete Grade** – If a student does not complete their assignments or fails to log into the system during the distance learning time, they will receive an INCOMPLETE. The incomplete must be turned into a grade by the first 9 weeks of the next semester. This provides the student an opportunity to attend virtual summer school or complete the assignments in the first nine weeks of the next semester. If a student is in jeopardy of receiving an incomplete, the teacher MUST have the appropriate documentation to make this happen. More specifically, the following must occur:

  1) Direct communication both verbally and in writing with your principal explaining the reason for the incomplete as well as a written plan that details how you will help the student successfully complete their work.

  2) Written documentation of the dates and times that you contacted the student and/or family about the missing assignments and grade concerns. You must have documented the conversation. If no response to a phone call or email, documentation must also be provided.

  3) A written letter from the teacher to the parent must be mailed to the address provided to the school district. The letter must state the specific reason for the incomplete. It must also include a detailed log of contacts and a timeline for completing all missing assignments. A copy of this letter must go to the appropriate principal and counselor.

- **F Grade** – If a student was failing your class prior to March 13th, they should be provided every opportunity to improve to a passing grade. Specifically, students must be allowed to complete past assignments at the same time that they are completing their Distance Learning assignments. In the case where a student was already failing and there has been no attempt to complete their Distance Learning assignments, then the student may be given a failing grade. If a student is going to receive a failing grade, the teacher MUST have the appropriate documentation to make this happen. More specifically, the following must occur:
1) Direct communication both verbally and in writing with your principal explaining the reason for the failing grade.

2) Written documentation of the dates and times that you contacted the student and/or family about the missing assignments and grade concerns. You must have documented the conversation; if no response to a phone call or email, documentation must also be provided.

3) A written letter from the teacher to the parent must be mailed to the address provided to the school district. The letter must state the specific reason for a failing grade. It must also include a detailed log of contacts and a timeline for completing all missing assignments. A copy of this letter must go to the appropriate principal and counselor.

There has been a lot of rhetoric about students not being required to complete their assignments. In fact, there have been conversations at the state level about student grades being frozen as of March 13th, which means they would not receive a lower grade during their Distance Learning time period. However, this is a local decision and we are expecting our students to complete their Distance Learning assignments for a grade well deserved.

Many school districts across the State of Oklahoma do not have the proper internet connection and do not provide technology to their students. However, in Muskogee, we have had the privilege of providing our students with the technology tools needed for distance learning to work. Due to this fortunate situation, we can expect our students to complete assignments and continue providing instruction without interruption. As we continue to strive towards excellence, ensuring that our students rise to the occasion is a non-negotiable.

I am proud of the work and dedication that everyone has exhibited through this unprecedented time. I know that without parental support, our Distance Learning plan would not be successful. You continue to work hard to support our teachers as they work with your child to be academically successful, but more importantly, your commitment to this team effort has been phenomenal. So, I want to say THANK YOU!

I hope this information helps as we move toward the end of our Distance Learning experience. Please continue to reach out to your child’s teacher and principal if you still have questions. We are here to support you and will continue to do our best as a Muskogee Family.

Sincerely,

Jarod Mendenhall, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Muskogee Public Schools