

**Memo To: Parents of Clover School District Students**

**From: Dr. Marc Sosne, Superintendent**

**Subject: Change in the Uniform Grading Scale**

On Tuesday, April 12, 2016, the State Board of Education voted unanimously to adopt a 10-point grading scale for all high school courses in South Carolina beginning in the 2016 -17 school year. This change will have a positive impact on students across the state, leveling the playing field for them as they compete for academic and athletic awards and scholarships. Additionally, this change will enable students to have a seamless transition into technical colleges or universities in South Carolina and nationally, as colleges and universities generally use the 10-point grading scale. The Clover School District Board of Trustees has adopted the 10-point grading scale for grades 3-8 and for English/language arts and mathematics in grade 2.

The adoption of the new grading scale will not lower our expectations for each grading band. Administrators and District Instructional Supervisors will work with teachers to revise assessments to maintain the rigor and quality performance expectations of the old 7-point grading scale.

We have attached a state department document answering some of the frequently asked questions. This should clarify some of the concerns you may have with the transition to the new grading scale. Please do not hesitate to call school administrators if you have additional questions regarding this change.

## **Frequently Asked Questions and Answers from the SC Department of Education**

### **1) Why did the State Board of Education vote to adopt a 10-point grading school?**

The South Carolina Department of Education recommended the state's transition from a 7-point to 10-point grading scale. Many months of stakeholder input and research went into this recommendation. We convened four working groups to examine the uniform grading policy. Members included parents, teachers, district superintendents, college professors, and the business community. Three working groups continue to meet and research the impact this change will have on lottery funds and college scholarships.

### **2) Did you make this change to benefit student-athletes?**

No. It was made reviewing the impact for all students across the state. Student athletes will benefit competing for college scholarships because their GPAs can be compared to other athletes in states using the 10-point scale, such as Florida, North Carolina, and Georgia. We are a military state, with one of the highest military student populations in the country. As thousands of military families move in and out of South Carolina every year, they will benefit from a seamless transition using a 10-point grading scale. Additionally, many South Carolina students are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to competing with their peers in other states for academic scholarships and awards; this decision creates an equal playing field for them.

### **3) When will this change take place?**

This change will take place beginning in the 2016-17 school year and move forward from there. It will cover all high school courses, meaning high school students will be graded on a 10-point scale and middle school students taking high school courses will also be graded on the 10-point scale just for those courses.

### **4) Is this new grading scale retroactive?**

No, the new grading scale is not retroactive. It goes into effect for the 2016-17 school year and only impacts a student's GPA on courses beginning in 2016-17. We will not go back in time and adjust GPAs before the 2016-17 school year.

### **5) Why can't this change be retroactive?**

We were unable to make the change in grading scales retroactive without changing the class rank of students. Since prior class rankings have an impact on scholarship opportunities, it is not possible to make the grading scale retroactive.

### **6) Does this new change apply to students in elementary and middle schools as well?**

Yes. Clover School District has adopted the 10 point grading scale for elementary and middle school courses that were graded on the old A-F (7-point) grading scale.

All grades (including summer school courses) taken prior to August 15, 2016 or prior to the district's first day of school in the 2016-17 school year, will be on the old 7-point scale.

### **7) How will GPAs be affected by this change in grading?**

GPAs are an outcome of the quality points associated with each numeric grade a student earns related to the class he or she took. If you look at the old GPA 7-point scale and compare it to the new 10-point scale, you will see that the new scale helps student GPAs in the following ways:

- creates the floor for a “passing grade” at 60 (D) rather than 70. The floor for a “C” is 70; “B” is 80; and “A” is 90. This aligns to the college scale which helps with dual credit courses taken in high school.
- continues to award weighted points for taking harder courses such as honors, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and dual credit courses.
- provides increasing quality points by .10 for each numeric grade.

Overall, this 10-point scale aligns South Carolina with all the states around us and provides an equal playing field for our students to compete for admissions into college and in-state scholarships such as HOPE, LIFE, and Palmetto Fellows. It is especially helpful to our military families who move a great deal and come into South Carolina from states where 10-point scales are used.

### **8) How will teachers be trained on this new grading scale?**

The South Carolina Department of Education has a robust plan to disseminate information to schools and specifically to teachers. On Monday, May 2, we conducted a statewide faculty virtual meeting for all South Carolina teachers and recorded the [webinar](#) for future viewing. Additionally, we are offering training to District Instructional Leaders, Guidance Counselors, Career and Technology Directors, Testing and Accountability Coordinators, and Special Education Directors through their monthly statewide meetings or at upcoming meetings/conferences so that these leaders may take the training information back to their districts.

### **9) How will this change affect students already in high school?**

As of August 15, 2016, all GPAs earned under the previous 7-point scale will be locked down. Depending on where a student is in high school, they will spend one, two, three, or four years under the new 10-point scale. For example, a rising senior will have one year under the 10-point scale and three with the 7-point scale; a rising junior will have two years under each; a rising sophomore will have three years under the 10-point scale and one using the 7-point scale; and an incoming freshman will have all four years in their transcript with the 10-point scale. This process will be fair to students because student class rank is only calculated for students within a particular grade. Seniors are only ranked compared to other seniors; juniors are ranked compared to other juniors, etc.

### **10) How will grades earned under each point scale be calculated?**

A student’s final transcript will average all the quality points and divide that by the number of credits attempted. Therefore, 13 credits on the 7-point scale will be averaged with the credits and quality points earned on the 10-point scale.