

**To: Board of Education Members**

**From:** Amy Oakley, Director of Instruction & Dan Halvorsen, FAHS Principal

**Cc:** Dr. Rob Abbott, Superintendent

**Re:** State of Wisconsin Waivers & Policy Recommendations for COVID-19 Closure

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The State of Wisconsin has provided districts the opportunity to consider local policy amendments and, as applicable, apply for waivers to achieve compliance with state and federal legislation and ensure no student is negatively impacted by the COVID-19 closure.

The Administration is recommending one-time local policy amendments and application for correlative waivers for the following areas:

### **SUMMARY of BOE ACTION RECOMMENDED**

#### **LOCAL POLICY ONE-TIME AMENDMENTS:**

- Board action to amend local policy regarding graduation requirements for the class of 2020 due to the COVID-19 closure:
  - Reduce credits for graduation to include only the minimum state requirement for graduation
  - Eliminate the civics graduation requirement
- Board action to amend local policy regarding grading, class promotion and credits for students in currently in kindergarten through grade 11 due to the COVID-19 closure:
  - Offer students and families at Fort Atkinson Middle School and Fort Atkinson High School choice regarding second semester GPA calculations.
  - Make notation on all transcripts and/or documents that enter the student's cumulative file regarding the COVID-19 closure.
  - Utilize family's preference for 2nd semester grade or default for class rank calculations as applicable at Fort Atkinson Middle School and Fort Atkinson High School using current procedures and calculations.
  - Award credit for Fort Atkinson Middle School and Fort Atkinson High School students who were on track with current coursework had the school year not been suspended.
  - Alleviate all grading for 4th quarter of the 2019/20 school year.
  - Promote all K-11 students to the next grade regardless of participation in 1Fort@Home or grades earned 2nd semester of the 2019-20 school year.

#### **REQUEST FOR STATE OF WISCONSIN WAIVERS:**

- Board action to request a DPI waiver for those current seniors who were on track with current coursework for them to have completed all state-required high school graduation requirements had the school year not been suspended.
- Board action to request a DPI waiver to waive the state-required civics graduation requirement.

Detailed information is provided below on each policy amendment and State of Wisconsin waiver recommendation.

## **INFORMATION & REFERENCE for RECOMMENDED BOARD ACTION**

### **GRADUATION & CREDIT FOR SENIORS**

Summary of Recommendations:

- 1. RECOMMENDATION: Amend SDFA policy to waive local elective requirements and adopt State minimum requirements for credits to achieve a high school diploma for the Class of 2020.**

The State of Wisconsin has the following graduation requirements under Wis. Stats. 118.33 for a total 15 credits including:

- English - 4 credits,
- Math - 3 credits,
- Science - 3 credits,
- Social Studies - 3 credits,
- Physical Education – 1.5 credits, and
- Health – 0.5 credits (in grades 7-12). There is also a civics exam required for graduation.

The State Superintendent encourages school boards to require an additional 8.5 credits selected from any combination of vocational education (career and technical education), foreign languages, fine arts, and other courses. Most districts have graduation requirements that far exceed the state-required 15 credits. These additional credits are at the discretion of local school boards, and can be changed by action of a local school board. Each district determines what requirements are necessary to grant a high school diploma beyond the 15 credits required under state law.

Currently the School District of Fort Atkinson requires 24 credits for graduation. Because of the COVID-19 closure, the State Superintendent is providing opportunity for local districts to remove barriers that would prevent graduation due to the COVID-19 closure. For additional information on DPI allowances for graduation due to the shutdown, click [HERE](#).

At this time, the administration is recommending that the local requirements for additional elective credits be waived for the class of 2020. This alleviates the pressure for students to complete elective coursework to achieve graduation during the COVID-19 closure.

- 2. RECOMMENDATION: Request a waiver from the State Superintendent from the state-required high school graduation requirements for those students who were on track with current coursework for them to have completed all state-required high school graduation requirements had the school year not been suspended.**

The State of Wisconsin has provided school boards the option to request a waiver from the state-required high school graduation requirements for those students who were on track with current coursework for them to have completed all state-required high school graduation requirements had the school year not been suspended. Details regarding this flexibility are outlined [HERE](#).

This action ensures that students who have not met the minimum 15 state-required graduation credits prior to shutdown, but were on track to meet those requirements in current coursework had the school year not been suspended, are not penalized by the closure.

The district is proposing using a student's 3rd quarter grade in state-required coursework for graduation as criteria to be considered "on track to have met requirements" under this waiver. All FAHS students will have the opportunity to increase his/her 3rd quarter grade within 1Fort@Home to achieve a passing grade in state-required coursework.

In light of the challenges of remote learning during the pandemic, this waiver alleviates students from completing the remainder of the 4th quarter of new learning to achieve graduation.

- 3. RECOMMENDATION: Amend local SDFA policy and request a waiver from the State Superintendent from the state-required civics graduation requirement for the class of 2020 due to the COVID-19 closure.**

Wisconsin statute requires that any students graduating from a Wisconsin high school "takes a civics test comprised of 100 questions that are identical to the 100 questions that may be asked of an individual during the process of applying for U.S. citizenship by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services and the pupil correctly answers at least 65 of those questions" (Wis. Stat. sec. 118.33(1m)(a)1, Section 3266R).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some students may not have passed the graduation requirement before Wisconsin schools were closed. The State Superintendent has offered local districts the opportunity to request a waiver for seniors that have not yet satisfied the civics graduation requirement that would prohibit students' ability to graduate in 2020. For more information on the civics graduation requirement, click [HERE](#).

The administration does not believe the civics exam could be administered during 1Fort@Home. Unequal and/or irregular access to technology as well as challenges related to administering an online or paper test during the COVID-19 closure are reasons the district will cite for this request.

In consideration of challenges related to remote assessment, this waiver alleviates the requirement for current seniors who have not yet passed the state civics exam to take and complete the state civics exam to satisfy state graduation requirements and achieve graduation.

## **GRADING, CLASS PROMOTION and CREDITS for STUDENTS in GRADES K through 11**

Summary of Recommendations:

1. **RECOMMENDATION: Board action to change local grading and class promotion policies regarding grading of students for the remainder of the school year and allow for class promotion for all students due to the COVID-19 shutdown.**

The School District of Fort Atkinson has local policy that outlines requirements for local grading and class promotion.

Due to the structure of 1Fort@Home, the administration is recommending that the Board of Education amend local policy to remove requirements for grading and criteria for class promotion for all students in kindergarten through grade 11 due to the COVID-19 closure. The amendment would make the following one-time provisions regarding grading and class promotion as applicable for students in grades kindergarten through grade 11:

- Offer students and families at Fort Atkinson Middle School and Fort Atkinson High School choice regarding second semester GPA calculations. Families, by course, can choose between using the 3rd quarter grade as the 2nd semester grade for GPA calculations OR opt for a pass/fail notation for 2nd semester of the 2019/20 school year. There are many considerations within this choice, and school guidance staff will be available to assist families. All students will be offered the opportunity to raise their 3rd quarter grade if desired prior to making the GPA selection. If families do not express a preference, the 2nd semester grade for GPA purposes will default to the student's 3rd quarter grade for each course.
- Make notation on all transcripts and/or documents that enter the student's cumulative file regarding the COVID-19 closure. Transcript will note the family's preference or default for the 2nd semester grade and GPA calculation which will be either the 3rd quarter grade or the pass/fail notation for each class.
- Utilize family's preference or default for 2nd semester grade for class rank calculations as applicable using current procedures and calculations.
- Award credit for Fort Atkinson Middle School and Fort Atkinson High School students who were on track with current coursework had the school year not been suspended. The district is proposing using a student's 3rd quarter grade as criteria to be considered "on track to have met requirements" under this amendment. A passing grade of D or higher will be sufficient to earn credit. All FAMS and FAHS students will have the opportunity to increase his/her 3rd quarter grade within 1Fort@Home in current coursework.
- Alleviate all grading for 4th quarter of the 2019/20 school year.
- Promote all K-11 students to the next grade regardless of participation in 1Fort@Home or grades earned 2nd semester of the 2019-20 school year.