

Credits, final averages won't appear for some MISD students

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When report cards go out this month, seventh-, eighth- and ninth-graders taking classes for high school credit will notice there's no semester grade or credit awarded.

Because of a state mandate requiring newly implemented end-of-course examinations to account for 15 percent of a student's final course average, fall grades will not be finalized until June when exam scores are released by the state, said Elise Kail, Midland ISD executive director of accountability.

At that time, 7.5 percent of the EOC grade will be applied to the fall semester grades. Each of the three grading cycles will account for about 14 percent of the grade, and credit will be awarded based on the student's final grade, she said.

The additional 7.5 percent of the EOC grade will be applied to the spring semester grades, and the average will determine whether a student receives credit for the second half of the year.

Students in the 2011-12 freshman class and younger are the only ones subject to new EOC requirements and State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) test. Sophomores, juniors and seniors will graduate under the existing Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) requirements.

All students will be required to pass 12 end-of-course examinations, scheduled four per year, per high school grade, and students must pass them to advance to the next grade. Students also must meet subject-level cumulative score requirements as defined by the state to graduate.

While the state mandates that 15 percent of the grade is based on the EOC, the state does not mandate how the district applies those grades, Kail said.

As a result, some districts may choose to give every student who passes the EOC a score of 100 or higher and every student who fails a score of 69. Others may choose to give students a score based on the number of questions answered correctly.

At this time, Midland ISD has not decided how it will award grades based on EOC results. It is an issue Kail said the district will begin to discuss in January.

"Most of the discussions revolve around ethical issues," Kail said. "What do you do for kids that doesn't penalize them for something the state has done that we didn't develop?"

Because districts have the freedom to award grades to their own standards, Kail said it is possible the application of EOC exam scores will affect students in different districts different ways.

“Everybody wants to do what’s right for kids, but we don’t exactly know what to expect because we’ve never had this test before and don’t know what failing is,” Kail said, noting the district doesn’t want to adopt a grade guideline without knowing how students will perform. “No district in the state wants to penalize kids for something they have no idea what it will look like.”

The Texas Education Agency is expected to release passing standards for the EOC exams in February.

Although students can retake the EOC exams up to three times each year to achieve a higher cumulative score for graduation distinction, only the first score students receive will be calculated into their GPA, according to district policy.

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