



Issue: School District Grading Policy

In 1984, the Texas Legislature passed the Texas Education Reform Bill (House Bill 72) which increased emphasis on academics through measures such as establishing 70 as a passing grade, requiring students to pass all courses they are currently taking to participate in extracurricular activities, and mastering certain skills to graduate with a diploma. HB 72 also prompted the State Board of Education (SBOE) to promulgate statewide grading parameters as a means to ensure fairness and set a standard of behavior for assessing student performance.

Over time, the Legislature eroded the SBOE's authority and in 1995 eliminated the SBOE's grading guidelines. As a result, local school boards were left to develop grading guidelines for their district.

Then in 2009, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 2033, which requires districts to set their own grading policies.

Current Law

As a result of SB 2033, Texas Education Code §28.0216 provides that prior to the start of the school year, a school district must adopt a grading policy that includes provisions for the assignment of grades on class assignments and exams. The policy (1) must require that a classroom teacher assign a grade that reflects the student's relative mastery of an assignment; (2) may not require a classroom teacher to assign a minimum grade for an assignment without regard to the student's quality of work; and (3) may allow a student a reasonable opportunity to make up or redo a class assignment or exam for which the student received a failing grade.

Issue Presented

Since the conclusion of the legislative session, the impact of this bill has been heavily debated. Some argue that the bill prohibits districts from requiring teachers to assign a minimum grade for an assignment, while others allege that the prohibition applies to an entire grading period (i.e., teachers cannot be required to award a minimum six weeks grade, regardless of the quality of the student's work).

Questions:

Have your district's grading guidelines ever required teachers to award a minimum grade for an assignment? If so, what was your board's rationale for that decision?

Do your district's grading guidelines in effect for the 2009-10 school year require teachers to award a minimum grade for a grading period? If so, what was your board's rationale for that decision?