Coginchaug English Department:

**Grading Policy** and **Schoolwork** **Philosophy**

Teachers design grading programs that best serve the specific needs of students in their classrooms. While professional discretion allows for a variety of formats and procedures, the Coginchaug English department does maintain a core set of standard grading policies, which are described here. In addition, this department is committed to a philosophical perspective on the alignment of students, teachers and parents working together to achieve the best possible learning outcomes, which is also outlined here. Both the grading policy and cooperative stakeholder triad are reflected in some way in the grades reported online through the PowerSchool portal.

**Grading Policy**:

We assess what we teach, and we teach what we determine necessary to help students achieve the learning goals articulated in each course’s curriculum. Sometimes we design assignments and assessments to see what students know and are able to do, and we use that information to figure out what to teach. Not every assignment is graded or included in the final grade. The final grade stands for a student’s progress toward those curriculum learning goals. However, the achievement of learning goals requires students to exhibit responsibility—one of our district’s core ethical values—and the habits of mind necessary to become lifelong learners—one of our district’s missions. Every grade measuring a student’s progress toward learning goals also reflects some element of those behaviors. Other than proscriptions described in IEPs or 504 plans, the English department employs these guidelines:

1. We do not offer extra credit. We construct a learning environment that is challenging enough for students to engage. We differentiate instruction and offer leveled coursework to accommodate the variety of learning needs of students and still maintain the appropriate intensity of coursework. More work to boost grade scores is counterproductive to learning.

2. Students are responsible for securing class work missed due to authorized absences and completing it according to school policy. Teachers do not seek students out to provide them with assignments but rather are available during x-block and immediately after school to review the assignments. Unauthorized absences will result in a score of 0 for any assignments, quizzes or tests due on that date, although the materials may be made available at the teacher’s discretion.

3. Late work is not acceptable. Specific student plans developed in review of learning obstacles during IEP or 504 meetings may restructure due dates, but even those have deadlines. On occasion, issues and circumstances arise that cause disruptions to students’ ability to follow through with homework or project deadlines, and students can request alternative arrangements with teachers ahead of time. Teachers weigh the nature of those disruptions to determine the appropriate course of action, which may or may not include a deadline extension.

4. Homework is assigned regularly. Homework provides an important opportunity to reinforce and augment skills built during classroom lessons. Independent exercise of what students learn in class strengthens the internalization of concepts and skills. Moreover, the nature of English instruction lends itself toward the frequent assignment of readings that then serve as the basis for classroom lessons. If students complete these homework assignments, they will make progress and achieve proficiency or mastery of curriculum goals.

**PowerSchool Guidelines**

Please remember the following general rules:

1. English teachers will update PowerSchool grades approximately every two weeks.
2. Teachers will post the due dates of assignments.
3. A check mark will indicate when an assignment has been collected but not yet graded.

The posted quarter grade is a grade in progress. Carefully read each teacher’s grading

practices in order to understand how it will fluctuate.

**Schoolwork Philosophy**:

The Coginchaug English department regularly reviews research into the best practices of teaching and learning English in secondary schools. We incorporate as much of the beneficial findings into our practice as possible. One of the most consistent findings over the years indicates students respond well to challenging expectations coupled with firm accountability systems. Students are successful when parents and teachers work together to help them meet high standards. As students enter high school, they are just beginning to take independent responsibility for their learning. When they leave, they are entirely independent and lifelong learners—ready for a post-secondary education such as college.

As students enter high school, they are just beginning to negotiate many responsibilities: schoolwork; family time; sports, clubs and activities; community service; and maybe even a job. Errors and mistakes in time management and decision making are common during this period, but they are opportunities for learning and growing. Teachers and parents help students take advantage of these opportunities by teaching the skills of independent learning and by providing support when students stumble. Through the four years of high school, however, we gradually release responsibility for time management and decision making to the students. The safety net school and home provide is slowly rolled back until, upon graduation, students exhibit the capacity for responsible citizenship of a young adult.