

16 February, 2017

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ATTN: Members and Acting Members of the Law Amendments Committee for Bill 75,

In regards to recent reassurances that the "No Fail Policy" does not exist, please be aware that it is literally impossible for Junior High teachers to assign a grade of "0" on assignments in the PowerTeacher Gradebook system. We assign a rubric score between 1 and 4 for each outcome potentially met by an assignment. A score of 1 indicates "no evidence of understanding" which can include the absence of assigned work. The problematic part comes when teachers are directed to use these symbolic rubric scores to create a percentage grade. The process is complex, but *can* result in the rubric score of 1 contributing a percentage score of 25% to a final grade - potentially with no work submitted.

Scores of 1+, 2 or 2+ indicate that a student has shown some evidence of understanding, but has not yet met the outcome. They are degrees of failure, however, a sequence of 2s or 2+s, when used to create a percentage grade, *can* result in grades of 50% and over. The percentage grade, which is a far less precise indication of a student's progress than specific rubric scores, is the single number used to determine whether a student has passed or failed. It is created solely for report cards because of an assumption that Nova Scotia parents are not capable of understanding the more specific, detailed, accurate, outcome-based results already available.

Additionally, a student can nearly complete a term with a gradebook full of 1s despite the best efforts of their teacher and parents, then submit a handful of assignments (which the teacher must create/provide for each of those students), potentially months late, for full credit just before report cards are due. Many of the unpaid hours I work to complete report cards come from the need to mark these late assignments. The combination of being forced to translate rubric scores to unrelated percentages and the lack of accountability is, in my opinion, the basis of what has been referred to as the No Fail Policy at the Junior High Level. Minimal effort, potentially months late, can allow a student to 'squeak by' with a passing percentage grade.

I hope this has helped to clarify part of the reality of the unwritten No Fail Policy in Nova Scotia schools.

Lael Radkey