

GLENBROOK HIGH SCHOOLS  
Office of the Superintendent  
Glenview - Northbrook, Illinois

To: Members of the Board of Education  
From: Charles Johns  
Date: Friday, May 1, 2020  
Re: Board Policy 7260

Glenbrook District 225 has an esteemed reputation for educational and academic excellence. Upholding this standard of excellence is a principle that we all value and labor to maintain. This goal of upholding our standards was a key consideration when making the decision of whether to hold final exams this semester. Unlike many districts, in District 225, final exams are codified into our policy. Board of Education Policy 7260 states in its first sentence, that, “Every course shall conclude with a final evaluation in which the student’s mastery of course objectives will be assessed.” The only exceptions in the policy are for second-semester seniors who have met conditions set forth by the schools. As it is written, any decision to cancel finals or alter their purpose beyond the assessment of mastery of objectives requires Board action.

Due to a number of obstacles brought on by the catastrophic circumstances of this spring, leading to an unprecedented closure of schools beginning in mid-March, the administration recommends that the Board of Education amend Policy 7260 to include a one-time exemption of final exams for the Spring Semester of the 2019-20 school year.

The rationale for this recommendation is based on logistical, systemic, and competing principles.

One of the clearest reasons to cancel finals is that no assessment would be able to assess mastery of course objectives with validity under these conditions. Students have had their academic lives deeply disrupted and their acquisition of concepts and skills has been impacted. This impact is not consistent across and between classes and students. Accomplishing mastery of objectives under these conditions is extremely difficult and would be an unfair benchmark.

An issue of fairness pervades the issue of final exams, as well. While our educators have worked diligently to find ways of educating all of their students, the simple truth is that each student has different learning circumstances at home and different pressures that impact his or her learning. Normally, the shared experience of the classroom mitigates some of these conditions along with the wealth of supports that our district provides. The availability and the ease of access to these services is unfortunately quite different than our norm. We know first hand that the illness and the closure have had a devastating impact on the lives of many of our students and their families. To test them under these conditions is unfair and would jeopardize their academic future and their well-being.

Scheduling factors, some outside of our control, bear heavy influence on the decision to exempt finals. Due to the year's disruption, the College Board postponed Advanced Placement Exams by one week. According to the AP exam schedule, the traditional exams finish on May 22 and the portfolio assessments (AP Computer Science and AP Art) are due on May 26. These later exams, taken by an estimated 100 students, coincide with the first day of /day before senior final exams (GBN starts on 5/26, GBS starts on 5/27). Students in other grades would have final exams the following week. This compacting of the schedule adds further stress on our students and forces them to make difficult decisions on where they put the focus of their studies.

There are internal scheduling issues, too. Aside from having less access to academic supports throughout the semester, many of our students with IEPs and 504 plans have access to test accommodations that we have a legal obligation to fulfill. In many cases, it is going to be nearly impossible to develop a method for how these accommodations will be delivered virtually. Even then, under normal circumstances, it takes hours and hours to schedule the accommodations and to align staff availability.

Alternatives to an exemption of final exams were rigorously examined and fall short of our academic principles. Our exams have been developed and refined over years of practice and are built upon the collective efforts of many professionals. They are meaningful and substantive. Modifications that would be necessary, recognizing the issues delineated above, would require considerable change. It would be difficult to conceive of slimmed-down final exams or activities that would meet the standard of assessing "mastery of course objectives." In the end, it was clear the amount of

modification would devalue and sacrifice the integrity of our traditional final exams. By school expectations, these exams are weighty and compromise between 5 - 20% of a semester grade.

In lieu of final exams, we will require each teacher to plan and implement a meaningful learning activity that brings closure to the course content, skills, and experience. Every student will have an opportunity to participate in this culminating learning activity for each of their classes during the last week of school: June 1, 2, 3, 4. Seniors will participate in the culminating activities on May 26, 27, 28, and 29, with their last day of school being on May 29.

## Final Evaluations

### Section A - Evaluation Requirement

Every course shall conclude with a final evaluation in which the student=s mastery of course objectives will be assessed. Further, every unit course shall include a mid-year and final evaluation. Appropriate time allotments for these evaluations shall be made. Exceptions to this policy may be made for second-semester seniors who meet requirements developed by each school.

### Section B - Methods of Evaluation

The method of final evaluation shall consist of one or more of the following as approved by the principal and the instructional supervisor:

1. A formal written examination which gives appropriate evidence of course mastery.
2. Take-home examination which gives appropriate evidence of course mastery.
3. Creative product (written, constructed, or performed) which gives appropriate evidence of course mastery.
4. Oral examination which gives appropriate evidence of course mastery.
5. Other forms of evaluation which give more appropriate evidence of course mastery.

### Section C - One Time Exemption

For the second semester of the 2019-20 school year, the final evaluation requirement is waived in lieu of alternative summative exercises that evaluate learning in a way that recognizes the circumstances related to school closures due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Approved: December 4, 1972  
Revised: January 21, 1980  
Revised: May 29, 2001  
Revised: July 21, 2008  
Revised: May 4, 2020