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Date: 7/3/2013 9:19:28 AM
Subject: ICYMI: Beaufort County school board discontinues use of grade floors

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State Superintendent Mick Zais, in an April 30 memo, said grade floors "fail to reflect an honest assessment of student mastery of work and the level of completion of a course of study."

<http://www.islandpacket.com/2013/07/02/2564600/board-of-education-to-discuss.html>

Beaufort County school board discontinues use of grade floors

Published: July 2, 2013

By TOM BARTON

The school board had this message for students Tuesday night: Beginning in August, what you earn is what you get.

The Beaufort County Board of Education voted unanimously to do away with grade floors, following outcries from parents and community members and disapproval from the state's top education official.

The board postponed a decision May 21 on the grading practice to give an ad hoc committee more time to study it and review it with newly appointed superintendent Jeffrey Moss.

The practice is used in some or all courses at about a dozen schools in the district.

"I think we should engage students and keep them actively involved during class, and there would not be a need for grade floors," Moss wrote in a May email to a school board member.

He applauded the board's decisions Tuesday, calling the committee's recommendation to end the floors "right on target."

The grading practice, which some say gives struggling students a chance to recover, essentially gives them a higher "F" on a report card. If, for example, a student earns a 45 percent during a quarter, it would show up as a 60 percent. The higher grade prevents the student from falling too far behind and allows another chance to pass before semester grades are issued, principals have said.

Others call it grade inflation and social promotion.

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County school board members agreed, but member Evva Anderson urged administrators to seek safety-net alternatives for struggling students.

"We still need to provide struggling students a chance to recover and prevent them from falling too far behind to the point where they lose hope and give up," Anderson said, "whether that means remediation or after-school tutoring or something else."

CLOSED SESSION QUESTIONED

The school board also met behind closed doors in apparent violation of state law.

The executive session was called to hear an evaluation from lobbyist Lynn Stokes-Murray of McNair Law Firm and state Sen. Tom-Davis, R-Beaufort, about progress this year in pursuing school finance reform and expanding early childhood education.

Chairman Bill Evans said he called the session because he believed the board would receive legal advice, which is allowed under the state's Freedom of Information Act.

"As it turned out, we received no legal advice," Evans said after the session. "I don't think that's anybody's fault -- probably a misunderstanding on my part about what we were going to hear from them."

Asked why he didn't reconvene in public, Evans said: "It wasn't clear until the end of the meeting that they weren't going to" provide legal advice.

Those who violate the law can be charged with a misdemeanor and face a \$100 fine or a 30-day jail term if convicted.

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