Midterm and Final Exams Practices

June 12, 2015

In the spring of 2015, Loudoun County Public Schools' Staff and Curriculum and Instruction Committee studied research-based best practices on assessments. The division conducted an anonymous survey of teachers, principals, parents and students\(^1\) regarding the practice of mid-term and final exams. Questions ranged from the amount of time spent creating, reviewing, grading, and sharing the results; the impact of midterm and final exams on semester grades; and the value placed on the experience of taking exams. Beyond the survey, a teacher focus group was conducted to deeply understand teachers’ perspective on this issue. After reviewing the research, survey, and focus group notes, staff is considering the following actions:

- LCPS will no longer require midterm or final exams. LCPS does allow teachers to administer summative assessments\(^2\), typically at the end of a unit, course, semester, program, or school year\(^3\), to evaluate student learning, skill attainment, and achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period

- School administrators and teachers must continue their practice of ensuring assessments are not weighted so heavily that students cannot recover from the impact of one low assessment grade

- The high schools' designated exam week calendar will no longer be in place. To increase instructional time, the eight days of early release for high school students at the end of the semesters (4 at the end of 1\(^{st}\) semester for exams and 4 at the end of 2\(^{nd}\) semester for exams) will now be regular days

- School administrators and teachers must continue to coordinate the scheduling of formative and summative assessments to ensure students are not required to take numerous assessments on any one day

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\(^1\) The survey was administered to 2,098 middle and high school teachers; 29 middle and high school principals; 750 parents; and 750 students.

\(^2\) Summative assessments are aligned with LCPS K-12 Assessment and Grading Common Expectations

\(^3\) This recommendation does not speak to State, Federal, Advanced Placement, or ACT/SAT tests.