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Response to BHEA and BHAA Letters on Grading Policy

John Migueis <john.migueis@gmail.com>

Thu, Dec 4, 2025 at 11:02 AM

To: jfinley@bhpsnj.org, kfleming@bhpsnj.org

Cc: boe <boe@bhpsnj.org>

Dear BHEA and BHAA Leadership,

I am writing in response to your recent letters regarding the Board of Education's proposed grading policy.

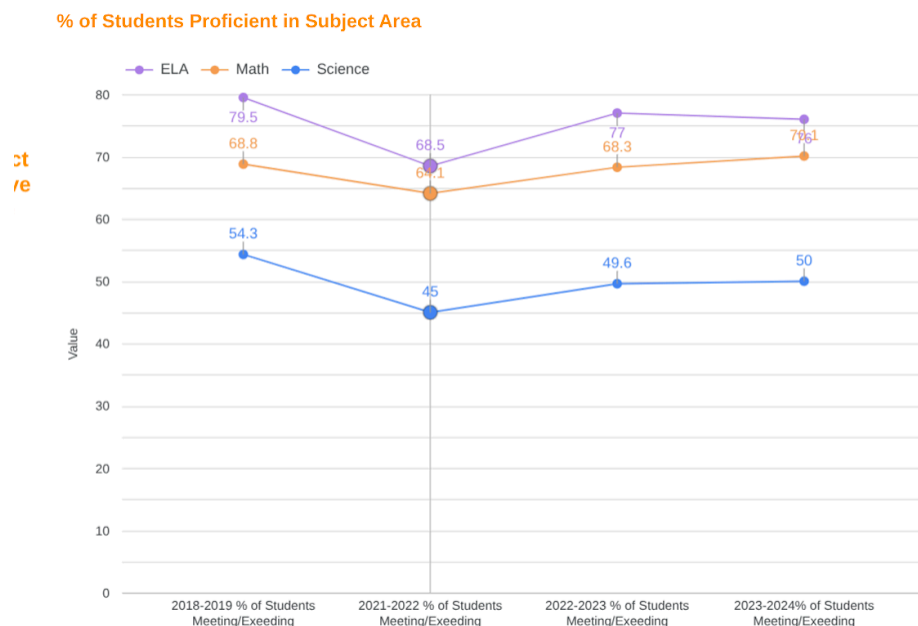
After reviewing both letters, I was struck by how focused they are on procedural limitations, negotiation requirements and claims of Board overreach, yet how they make no reference at all to student outcomes, statewide performance data or the academic challenges our students are facing.

New Jersey's most recent statewide assessment results show that we are far from where we need to be. According to the 2024–25 NJSLA release:

- ELA proficiency remains between 40 and 50 percent for most grades with Grade 8 at only 21 percent
- Algebra I proficiency has fallen to 38 percent
- Science proficiency is 19 percent in Grade 8 and 31 percent in Grade 11

This reflects a statewide decline that predates the pandemic and has continued through multiple cohorts. At the same time New Jersey still reports achievement gaps of more than 40 percentage points between student groups.

Our own District, which staff and leadership often refer to as high performing, is operating within the same reality. This is the context in which the Board is attempting to update the District's grading expectations. And this cannot be where the conversation stops. There needs to be a hard look at teaching methods, investment in tutoring and accurate and meaningful evaluations of teacher and administrator performance.



Math is a mess.

Science is a disaster.

And much of this relates to how these subjects are being taught at CMS and GLHS.

Yet neither the BHEA nor the BHAA letters acknowledge this context or offer any proposal that addresses student learning, achievement gaps or instructional improvement. Instead both letters rely almost entirely on INCORRECT arguments that the Board's efforts intrude on contract language or administrative procedure.

The community is increasingly concerned about the direction of our schools. As someone who has followed district governance, union communications and administrative statements for years, I cannot recall a time when either organization publicly acknowledged responsibility for academic decline or offered a solutions-oriented plan that reflects ownership of the issue. When performance improves both groups share in the credit. When performance declines the response is silence, deflection or procedural argument.

This mirrors what is happening at the state level with the NJEA. Recent choices such as investing heavily in a candidate with a well-known record of questionable ethics and then shifting to arguments about how expanding pensions benefits kids have left many educators and families questioning whether these priorities reflect student needs.

I also cannot recall a time when either organization questioned the enormous amount of resources that have gone into security theater. I cannot recall an objection when the Mayor turned the District's budget meeting into a spectacle for her legacy project which was wrapped in questionable decisions instead of focusing on our students.

Yet this grading policy is what prompts two formal letters.

The Board of Education has a statutory duty to set grading policy, instructional expectations and academic standards. Negotiation and consultation are part of the process but they cannot become a shield against efforts to improve academic outcomes especially when statewide scores and local concerns make it clear that inaction is not acceptable.

I encourage both associations to step back and reevaluate organizational priorities and to clearly convey to the community:

1. What responsibility you believe you hold for student achievement
2. What concrete solutions you are prepared to support not only regarding employment terms but also regarding the academic needs of Berkeley Heights students

Both sides of the aisle are becoming increasingly frustrated about the direction of our school and I implore both of your organizations to focus on what you can do to help to solve the problem instead of misintepreting a legitimate Board role and running interference.

And before you dismiss this as "anti union" my father was a laborer his entire life as were all my uncles - we were and are a proud blue collar jersey family. I am a proud supporter of **private unions** and believe public unions can be a force for good if they align their priorities with common sense policy positons. Please take this fedback as intended and come to the table with real solutions.

Respectfully,
John Migueis
Berkeley Heights

Berkeley Heights Education Association

P.O. Box 314

Berkeley Heights, New Jersey 07922



Dear Dr. Feltre:

On behalf of the Berkeley Heights Education Association, I would like to share our concerns regarding the proposed revisions to the district's grading policy. Several components of the proposed policy—such as prescribing the number of assignments per marking period, mandating test-correction procedures, and establishing rigid requirements for the timing and frequency of grade submissions—directly affect educators' terms and conditions of employment. Under state labor law, these matters are considered **mandatory subjects of negotiation** and therefore must be bargained with the Association before any changes can be implemented.

We want to be clear that the BHEA remains fully committed to working cooperatively with the administration to address concerns about grading equity or consistency. When issues arise, they can, and should be, handled at the individual/supervisory level, where context-specific solutions can be developed without diminishing professionalism and/or instructional autonomy. A broad, unilateral policy—however well-intentioned—risks undermining both due process and effective classroom practice.

With this in mind, we respectfully request that the Board refrain from acting on or adopting the proposed policy until the required negotiations can take place. If the Board were to move forward without bargaining, it would compel the BHEA to file an Unfair Labor Practice charge, which we sincerely hope to avoid. Our goal is not confrontation but collaboration, and we believe these conversations will be most productive when conducted through the established collective bargaining process. This being a negotiations year provides an opportunity for thoughtful discussion on the matter..

We remain ready and willing to meet promptly to discuss these matters in a constructive and solution-oriented manner. Thank you for your attention and for your continued partnership in supporting the students and staff of our community.

Sincerely,
Kimberly Fleming
President, Berkeley Heights Education Association

November 20, 2025

To the Board of Education:

The members of the BHAA have reviewed the updated language for policy 2624 that was included as part of the 11/20 BOE Agenda. While we appreciate the Board's efforts to establish clear expectations for grading practices across the district; the membership has several concerns about the proposed policy as written.

While the spirit of creating consistency and equity in grading is a cause that we firmly believe in, developing a granular directive for uniformity in test corrections, number of assignments, timeliness of grades, and weighting/ point values may unintentionally limit teacher professional judgment. While consistency is important, learning across different subjects and grade levels does not always fit into a single procedural mold. Teachers need flexibility to design grading structures that best support the developmental needs of their students, the specific learning outcomes of their course, and the instructional approaches most appropriate to their content area. Over-standardizing these elements risks narrowing the professional autonomy of educators and could ultimately constrain instructional creativity and responsiveness.

It is also important to note that many of the expectations outlined in the policy are already well established practices in our district. Teachers, administrators, and support staff regularly analyze assessment data, review grading trends, and collaborate to make informed instructional decisions that support student learning. We continually refine our approaches based on evidence and student outcomes. If and when a concern is raised, we are more than happy to share and discuss this analysis to provide clarity and help others understand the systems in place. Because these processes are already embedded in our professional culture, it would be helpful for the policy to acknowledge and build upon existing systems rather than imply a need for stricter procedural oversight that may duplicate or complicate effective work already being done.

Lastly, while the policy calls for the Superintendent to consult with teaching staff, parents, and students in the development of the grading program, this collaborative process does not imply collaboration with the administrative team, many of whom were hired specifically based on their expertise in curriculum and assessment. The development of any districtwide grading policy must reflect genuine collaboration among those with expertise and those who work closest with students each day. Effective, sustainable policies emerge when educators, administrators, families, and students engage in open dialogue and shared problem-solving. When policies are created or revised without meaningful input from instructional professionals, it can unintentionally diminish the expertise of the very people responsible for implementing those practices, and it may lead to decreased morale or inconsistent application. Our district's strength has long come from collaborative decision-making, not unilateral directives, and any grading framework should continue to honor that culture.

In summary, we respectfully ask the Board to reconsider aspects of the policy that may inadvertently create inconsistencies, reduce teacher autonomy, or introduce inequitable grading practices. It is also important to reaffirm that our instructional decisions are, and must remain, grounded in evidence, not

assumptions, anecdotes, or isolated concerns. As educators, we regularly analyze student performance data, review grading trends, participate in professional discussions, and adjust our practices based on what the research and our observations show is most effective. This reflective cycle is already deeply embedded in our work, and it guides us far more reliably than external pressures or individual complaints. A successful policy should reinforce and support these processes, not override them. By engaging educators meaningfully, acknowledging the systems already in place, and ensuring that decisions are rooted in evidence, the district can create a grading policy that is equitable, coherent, and supportive of both student learning and teacher professionalism.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

The Membership of the Berkeley Heights Administrative Association

2624 GRADING SYSTEM

The Board of Education recognizes that a system of measuring, recording, and reporting the achievements of individual ~~students~~ ~~pupils~~ is important to the continuing process of learning. **The Board, therefore, directs the instructional program of this school district to include a system of grading that measures progress toward the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards and the educational goals of the district.**

The Board directs that the instructional program of this district include a system of grading in grades K through 12 consistent with the educational goals of the district. Grades will measure the progress of ~~students~~ ~~pupils~~ against both their own potential for achievement and the achievements of others in their class as appropriate to the grade level and subject matter. **The administration shall enforce consistency in grading practices in the Middle School and High School departments, including but not limited to test corrections, number of assignments, timeliness of grades, and consistent weighting and/or point value.**

~~Pupils~~ **Students** shall be informed at the outset of any course of study of the behaviors and achievements that are expected of them and shall be kept informed of their progress during the course of study. As a rule, grading should reward ~~students~~ ~~pupils~~ for positive efforts and minimize failure, and ~~students~~ ~~pupils~~ should be encouraged to evaluate their own achievements.

The Superintendent shall develop and continually review in consultation with teaching staff members, parents or legal guardians, and ~~students~~ ~~pupils~~, a grading program appropriate to the course of study and maturity of ~~students~~ ~~pupils~~. The final decision on any contested grade will be the responsibility of the principal. A ~~student~~ ~~pupil~~ classified as disabled will be graded in accordance with his or her **Individualized Educational Program (IEP) or the Section 504 Plan** ~~individualized educational program~~.

Adopted: 11 February 1991

Revised: 15 February 2001

Berkeley Heights Public School District