

**Proposed Changes to Board of Education Policies  
Policy 6020 – Basis for Grading, Avon High School**

**Additional Questions Received from Members of the Board of Education as of February 23, 2015**

1. There have been lots of discussion about support systems. What support systems are currently in place? What new support systems will be added to help AC students/all students be more successful?

**Response:**

Current Practice	Future Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Math Lab – drop in</li> <li>• ELA Lab – drop in</li> <li>• Writing Center – drop in</li> <li>• Student Assistance Center – drop in and/or assigned</li> <li>• Freshman Leadership Academy</li> <li>• school psychologist/social worker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Math Lab – drop in and/or assigned</li> <li>• ELA Lab – drop in and/or assigned</li> <li>• Writing Center – drop in</li> <li>• Student Assistance Center – drop in and/or assigned</li> <li>• Freshman Leadership Academy</li> <li>• SRBI Team</li> <li>• restructured special services delivery (this may include a specific course sequence related to study skills and an improved model for co-teaching)</li> <li>• school psychologist/social worker (implementation of more group services)</li> </ul>

2. What specific professional development is planned, and when, to help teachers learn to implement differentiated instruction? Is there time for adequate training prior to fall 2015?

**Response:** Professional development will continue into the next school year. Administration is currently working with each department coordinator to develop a content-area-specific plan. For the duration of this year, the following is planned:

- Professional Development with Ellen Retelle on March 6. Full faculty and staff focused on the what, why, and how of differentiation.
- Content-specific professional development for each area with experts in the field. Working on a series of four visits to AHS per discipline. This will include direct instruction, observation, and coaching.
- Allowing professional time for teachers to observe colleagues in other buildings throughout the spring.
- Additional release time/weekend time for curriculum work ensure necessary structures are in place.
- Voluntary read of *Children in Room E4* with four facilitation sessions by Gerald Hairston from SERC.
- Exploring the possibility of a summer institute if there is adequate interest.

3. What concerns have parents of AC level students expressed with the current curriculum/structure of the AC courses?

**Response:** The primary concern that has been expressed relates to college readiness. The current structure does not allow access to the full curriculum, especially in math and world language.

4. How will administration ensure that the curriculum/pacing of CP stays the way it is currently, and is not lowered as a result of 2 or 3 former AC students being added to each class? How will administration ensure that there won't end up being two different tests or levels within CP?

**Response:** This will be addressed through the curriculum revision process, the implementation of the APS teacher evaluation plan, professional development, and our close work with department coordinators.

5. If there are currently no issues with the Honors or CP levels and the issues are that students are not being challenged in Academic classes, or are receiving less curricular materials in AC as opposed to CP, why can't the AC level be "fine tuned" rather than eliminated? For example:
- Revise AC curriculum to more closely track CP and honors levels--so that students could move out of academic courses (and hopefully would "eliminate" the need for AC over time)
  - Challenge teachers to implement differentiation in the AC level (and all levels) to encourage students to be successful and naturally move to CP level.

**Response:** While both of these are good suggestions, two problems will persist. First, curriculum at the CP level should be our minimum standard for graduation from Avon High School. While not all students attend college, it is our job to prepare them with those skills should that be the path that they choose. Secondly, any attempt to fix the AC level will fail to address the problem of over representation of special education, 504, black, and Hispanic students.

6. What have been the challenges associated with reducing levels in other districts? How are we proposing to address those challenges? Supposedly a very liberal teacher from Vernon is quite unhappy that their reduction of a level has not been successful.

**Response:** The challenge has been with the teaching not the learning. Students have been and will continue to be successful. Teachers are required to make a change in practice to appropriately meet the needs of all learners. We are at the end of the wave of eliminating an academic level when compared to districts that profile similarly. There is no evidence that this change would negatively impact students.

7. In two or three sentences what is the purpose for the proposed changes?

**Response:** These changes will improve all aspects of teaching and learning at Avon High School. Whether choosing a lens of high expectations, student engagement, equity and access, or all of the above, these changes will position us to be competitive as we prepare all students for success during and beyond high school.

8. Maybe this will be addressed in some of the questions above, how is what's supposedly not working currently in AC (both teacher and student issue) all of a sudden going to work when AC students are in CP courses?

**Response:** This will work as a result of the professional development we will provide for the remainder of this year, through collaborative teams, through reorganization of special education services, and through SRBI implementation. This will result in a culture of rigor and contribute to improvements in our learning environment.

9. Is differentiated testing currently happening at AHS?

**Response:** In very rare instances. There are some math teachers that are providing choice questions on assessments, but the choice reflects different point values. For example, questions 1A and 1B measure the same concept. If you choose 1A you may earn 5 points, if you choose 1B you may earn four points. Other instances of differentiation exist with writing assignments, topic choice, and are at the core of authentic/performance based assessment.

10. If so, is it occurring within the same level?

**Response:** Yes, these examples are within the same level.

11. If not, will the elimination of the Academic Level result in differentiated testing? And will the differentiated testing occur within the same level? (If this is an I don't know answer, and since this was implemented in Simsbury, and since Chris is from Simsbury, did it result in differentiated testing in Simsbury?)

**Response:** The examples of differentiated assessing that we would support are holding the students to the same standard of learning, but potentially using a different path to show the appropriate level of mastery. For example, having a choice between an essay or multiple choice in social studies, or writing a paper vs. a comprehensive presentation in science.

12. How will success be measured or monitored once this change is implemented? (Again, see above. Since Chris is comfortable stating that this worked in Simsbury, how does he reach that conclusion?)

**Response:** We will continue to monitor student performance through grade distributions, our performance on high stakes testing, results of our school climate survey, and through use of data generated by our teacher evaluation plan.

13. You sort of asked this question, but I've made it more pointed: Have we had any complaints from the students or parents of students in the Academic Level about lack of mobility between levels (i.e. a parent or student who wanted the student to go to the CP level from the Academic Level but was told no because of a lack of content in the Academic Level that makes the move impossible).

**Response:** No, there are rare attempts of students trying to level out of AC courses.