

Question and Answer for the Decision to Award Credit at Semester

Q: Awarding .5 credit on year-long courses was the norm in the district for many years, why was the change made to yearly averaging in the first place?

A: The District Report Card Committee recommended that all courses be structured the same as courses with a State End of Course Exams (SEOC). The SEOC courses use yearly averaging to accommodate the statutory requirement of applying a 30% value for the SEOC to the entire course grade. Making the courses year-long facilitated an automated solution to calculating SEOC as 30% of the final average. It was anticipated that all courses would have some type of percentage of the total grade based on either a SEOC or the statute required district developed course assessments (DDA) which the state required to be in place during 2015 school year. With all that in mind, having a consistent program seemed the best policy.

Q: If that was the case what went wrong with the plan?

A: It was discovered that if a grade point average (GPA) was not attached to a .5 credit at semester, that students could not apply for early acceptance to the Bright Futures Scholarship program. If they applied at the end of the year when final grades were averaged, there was not a problem. However early acceptance to this scholarship program is very important to senior students and their families, so it was determined that immediate action had to be taken. Apparently assurances that yearlong averaging would not impact Bright Futures recipients did not take into consideration early applicants and St. Johns was one of several districts impacted by this discovery.

Q: Why hadn't the year-long SEOC courses been a problem with Bright Futures Applications?

A: The courses were Civics, Biology, Algebra I, Geometry and US History, all courses that seniors who would qualify for early acceptance to Bright Futures would have previously taken to submitting an early application. In other words it is only the courses that are in-progress that cause a concern.

Q: So, will this change my student's semester GPA?

A: No, the only thing that is changing for the semester is the addition of the .5 credit to go with the GPA. Grades all stay the same, only now there is a .5 credit associated with the GPA.

Q: My child is a slow starter and was told by her teacher that with yearly averaging she might be able to pull up her final average with improved performance during the second semester. Will the change to semester averaging prevent a teacher from taking into consideration that my child did master the content, but did so later in the year?

A: There are really two answers to this question. Yes, it could have an impact since credit will have already been earned for the first semester and those scores will not be averaged with the second semester. However, there are existing mechanisms for grade changes and/or overrides that could be applied by a teacher with administrative approval. To assist schools with considering who may have been negatively impacted by the change, a report will be created which will identify students (if any) who are negatively impacted by the change to semester averaging.

Teachers and schools may offer consideration to individual cases in a similar manner as was done in the past via the grade change process at the school.

Q: Will semester averaging continue into the next school year?

A: That answer has not been determined, but as long as early application to Bright Futures is a concern, it is likely that semester averaging will continue.

In summary, the change back to semester average for all but SEOC courses was to enable St. Johns County School District students to qualify for early admission to the Bright Futures Program. Grade point averages will not be impacted. A .5 credit will be awarded to go with the existing first semester grades.

