



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Mick Zais  
Superintendent

1429 Senate Street  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** District Superintendents  
**FROM:** Mick Zais, State Superintendent of Education *MZ 29 May 2012*  
**CC:** Members, State Board of Education  
Members, House Education and Public Works Committee  
Members, Senate Education Committee  
**DATE:** May 29, 2012  
**SUBJECT:** Grade Basements

On April 30, 2012 I distributed a memorandum to you to discuss the document called the South Carolina Uniform Grading Policy (UGP). In it, I stated the following:

**“There seems to be some confusion about the South Carolina Uniform Grading Policy. Let me be clear. The policy does not include any provisions or recommendations that support districts or schools engaging in minimum grade practices for students who may be failing a course. The Uniform Grading Policy does not have a provision that would encourage such practices. You may review the Uniform Grading Policy by viewing <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/programs-services/131/>.”**

On May 18, 2012, State Board of Education Chair Dennis Thompson distributed a memorandum to you announcing an administrative ruling by the State Board of Education adopted at the May 9, 2012 meeting. It states:

**“The purpose of the uniform grading scale is to assign the point values for the final grades that students earn for any given course. The final grades students earn should reflect the districts’ best understanding of students’ mastery of content or completion of the work for the course any student attempts. The uniform grading policy provides clarity in how the grades students earn will be used to calculate students’ GPAs. The uniform grading policy should not be interpreted by school districts as changing or modifying district grading practices.”**

Additionally, there is not a state statute or state regulation explicitly authorizing the use of “minimum grading policies” by school districts. The scale score range for the End-of-Course Examination Program (EOCEP) is 0-100. Scores from the EOCEP must count as 20% of a student’s grade in the course. The actual score must be used to calculate the student’s final grade.

Through the complaints I receive regarding “grade basements,” teachers and parents are told at the local level the authority comes from the UGP. This is not correct.

In response to complaints going forward I will agree with them: grade basements are bad public policy. I will also give them the contact information for their district superintendent and school board chair because only the districts can set a policy that differs from the UGP.

I will post this memorandum along with all others on the SCDE website so the public can remain informed on this important issue.