Hempstead School District Rounding Up Grade Policy

Aisha Al-Muslim

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/aisha_al_muslim/50/
EXCLUSIVE

DISTRICT BOOSTS GRADES

Hempstead routinely lifts failing 63s and 64s to passing 65s in grades 6-12

A2-3 | GET UPDATES AT NEWSDAY.COM
The Hempstead school district has been systematically changing some students’ failing final course grades into passing grades.

The district has routinely lifted final course grades of 63 or 64 to a passing score of 65 for all students in grades 6-12, according to district Deputy Superintendent Julius Brown. One district source involved in changing the grades estimated as many as 800 grades were changed this school year.

The decades-long policy was designed to prevent confrontations between teachers, parents and students, and to give students a better chance of attending college, Brown said.

Brown added that rounding up grades is standard public school practice. But other Long Island education officials said the district’s new computer—unique to Hempstead—was designed to boost the graduation rate.

Asked to identify other districts that change grades in a similar fashion, Brown cited Uniondale and Malverne. Officials from both districts confirmed grade changes manually every two years, while Hempstead schools—a short list of the state’s lowest-performing districts—changed grades electronically.

Hempstead, which has nearly 6,000 students, is consistently one of the lowest-performing districts in the state. Its graduation rate in 2011-12 was 38 percent, the lowest among the Island’s 124 public school districts.

Classification reviewed

The state Education Department is reviewing its decision not to classify Hempstead High School as a “priority school”—a short list of the state’s lowest-performing schools—according to a May 13 letter sent to the district.

Four high-ranking Hempstead officials said the district’s policy of lifting grades was designed to boost the graduation rate.

Brown denied that and described the practice as common.

“I don’t know of anyone who doesn’t do it,” he said. “Our grading practices and policies are consistent with laws and the authorities that are vested with the school district and the superintendent.”

“A short list of the state’s lowest-performing schools — according to a May 13 letter sent to the district. Four high-ranking Hempstead officials said the district’s policy of lifting grades was designed to boost the graduation rate.

Brown denied that and described the practice as common.

“I don’t know of anyone who doesn’t do it,” he said. “Our grading practices and policies are consistent with laws and the authorities that are vested with the school district and the superintendent.”

Asked to identify other districts that change grades in a similar fashion, Brown cited Uniondale and Malverne.

Officials from both districts denied Brown’s contention.

“Uniondale School District does not round grades,” spokeswoman Donna Janine wrote in an email. “If a student earns a 63 grade, that is the grade the student receives.”

Two past presidents of the New York State Council of School Superintendents—Jericho Superintendent Henry Grishman and Rockville Centre Superintendent William Johnson—said they had never heard of a district enforcing an electronic program so that grades of 63 and 64 were
Girl gets 2nd lung transplant

PHILADELPHIA — A 10-year-old Pennsylvania girl who underwent a double-lung transplant amid a national debate about organ allocation has undergone a second transplant and is now taking some breaths on her own, the girl’s parents said yesterday.

Sarah Murnaghan’s mother said the first set of lungs failed within hours after the June 12 transplant at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia and Sarah was placed on machines. She was placed back on the lung transplant list the night after her surgery and received a second set of lungs on June 15.

“We were told . . . that she was going to die,” the girl’s mother, Janet Murnaghan, said at a news conference yesterday in explaining why the second transplant was not disclosed. “We weren’t prepared to live out her dying in public.”

Sarah initially received lungs from an adult donor after her parents sued over national rules that place children behind adolescents and adults on the list for adult lungs.

Janet Murnaghan said Sarah’s condition began to “spiral out of control” shortly after the first surgery. A second set of lungs, from a donor 12 or older, was found and transplanted though they were infected with pneumonia, making the surgery extra risky.

“Neither confirms nor denies” it is a success, she said. She placed back on a ventilator due to partial paralysis of her diaphragm, a complication of surgery that is not allowing her lungs to expand, her mother said. She said Sarah is slated for surgery on Monday in an effort to repair her diaphragm.

“Her doctors continue to wean her from her ventilator, her last two chest tubes were removed today,” Janet Murnaghan said. “We’re not out of the woods, but Sarah’s health is trending in the right direction.”

The failure of the first transplant is not uncommon. A 2005 University of Pennsylvania study found nearly 12 percent of lung transplants experienced primary graft failure, where the organ almost immediately begins to fail. But the timing — she received a second set of lungs just three days after her first — was unusual.

— AP