

No harm grading harms students and teachers alike

With the transition to remote learning due to coronavirus, the Douglas County School District implemented a “no harm grading” policy. According to DCSD’s Remote Learning Plan, “During this closure, DCSD is approaching grades with a ‘hold harmless’ plan where grades will not go down from the end of third quarter; rather, they can only improve.”

This policy, while it clearly had its purpose, is fundamentally flawed. “I understand why no harm grading is being used during this unprecedented time of a pandemic. Many students were not prepared and may not have the resources to stay on top of online learning. But student participation in my classes went from 90% to around 50% when students found out that their grades would not decrease,” said Tyler Smith, math teacher.

The reason that no harm grading has been failing is precisely due to the lack of participation. Students can take the easy way out and not be penalized at all, especially if they have good grades. If a student has all A’s, for example, what’s motivating them to do their work? It shouldn’t be a shocker student participation is down. While I can understand why it was initially implemented, having it be in place for more than a month has hurt more than it has helped. There’s simply just nothing pushing students to do anything. If they like where their grade is at, then there’s no point in doing work. Students won’t embrace “learning for learning’s sake” because most students base their success in a class solely off grades.

“The fact that our grades are not going down is just an easy excuse to not do work,” said Ashley Dang, freshman. “People are blowing so many assignments off.” It’s not surprising that a

majority of students aren't doing their work because the district is essentially just saying "please," and is hoping that will keep students engaged.

The main goal of this policy was to make sure that kids with unequal access to the internet and remote-learning tools wouldn't be penalized if they failed to do their work. This made sense to implement in the short term; it allowed for people to catch up and prepare for remote learning, with the appropriate tools to do so. If they still can't provide for the tools, then you let them have the semester-long no harm grading or have the school district provide the tools from their pocket. The fact of the matter is that no harm grading just simply doesn't work in the long run when it's applied to everyone, and it hurts the student's ability to learn.