

Butts' Briefs Jan 2019

Happy New Year!

For those of us that have been around the block a few times, I find it interesting that 1999 was 20 years ago. Time passes by quickly.

There are new changes that come with each new year. Watertown HS is no exception. We have been working on strategies to get their best work and the most accurate grades for our students. We have been tasking students to give us their best effort the first time and their best efforts every time. I expect that if your student has not been giving their best effort that you have been contacted by teachers asking for assistance getting your student in to work with them before or after school. We call it Over Time (OT). We have seen a better success rate in passing grades and completing courses over the first two grading periods this year when compared to the past three years. The success rate for second quarter (Oct-Dec 2018) is the best since 2007!

We have also adjusted some of our grading practices to more accurately show what students know and can do in the curriculum.

We have eliminated extra credit/bonus points to grades. These points were there to boost (inflate) a grade and did not accurately show what the student knows and can do. Each of the teachers has strategies to ensure that students are doing their best work and sometimes redoing the work if it is not their best. We have stopped granting extra credit for things that are not academic work directly related to the curriculum.

We will not deduct points from a grade for behavior. The most common example is taking off points for turning in an assignment that is late or after the due date. Instead, the student will be assigned OT and be expected to be in the classroom before or after school working with the teacher on that assignment. This does not mean students have more time and can choose to not turn work in by the deadlines. What it does mean is that the student will be required to spend more time at school to fix delinquent work. Students that do not show up for assigned OT, will be placed in classroom suspension for the next class period. In some situations, students may not be allowed to earn full credit (90% max) for work that is completed well beyond the due date. Bottom-line is there are deadlines for work, students need to meet those deadlines or they will do Overtime.

Students cannot "take a zero" on an assignment. Every assignment given must be completed. Teachers only give assignments that serve the purpose of helping the student reach mastery of a curriculum standard. Students that have delinquent work will be assigned OT and the grade in Campus will be marked as Missing. Missing counts as a zero in the calculation of the grade, however Missing indicates that it still needs to be completed. Students cannot opt to skip assignments or not do work, they must do every assignment. Ultimately, work that never gets completed remains as a zero in the gradebook. Students that cheat, copy, or plagiarize others work may still receive a zero on the assignment. We want their best effort, not someone else's

work. We are working on strategies for students that cheat to still be held accountable to do the work themselves and receive some credit. However, this is not uniform across WHS at this point. Best advice we can give to students is “be responsible for your own work.”

We are excited to see the student’s grades shine based on their best effort every time.

We are looking forward to the Parent Teacher Conferences on Feb 15. Look for more information out soon regarding that full day of conferences.

Until then, please check your student’s progress in Campus, contact teachers and principals for assistance if needed.

Happy New Year!  
Dr. Michael Butts  
WHS Principal