WSD Sample Motions: November 2022

Prepared Motions:

1. As part of the ongoing effort to improve public education outcomes, this House supports reformed grading systems.

Context: Many educators are moving away from traditional, point-driven grading systems in favor of reformed systems (standards-based grading, pass/fail grading, etc.) in order to try to create a more accurate measure of learning and reduce inequity in public schools. This trend has been accelerated by Covid-related academic impacts. But not everyone is on board, and supporters of traditional grading systems point to issues with consistency & transparency to support their opposition to reform.

Prop:

Traditional grading systems emphasize correctness over learning and do not create many opportunities for improvement/revision. Reformed grading systems emphasize growth and prioritize continuous improvement, and research shows that these systems result in fewer behavior issues as well.

Traditional grading systems discourage creative exploration and reward cheating, and they don't provide a learning-centered picture of students' knowledge and abilities. Reformed grading systems minimize failure (and, as a result, course repeats), freeing up more scheduled space for elective courses.

Traditional grading policies help maintain gender, race, class, and ability biases in the school setting.

Opp:

Reformed grading systems do not emphasize student accountability, and do not provide a universal measure of learning that parents and other adults can easily understand.

Reformed grading systems require an overhaul in policy and practice, both of which require a lot of additional work and education (most of which falls on teachers who are already overworked and underpaid), which takes away from other important initiatives in education.

The lack of consistency between reformed grading systems can make it difficult for students to understand and navigate the success criteria associated with each course, creating additional barriers for neurodivergent students & increasing opportunities for teacher bias to influence student outcomes.