

Board of Education

Effective: July 15, 2021

Policy Outline

- I. Policy Value Statement
- II. Purpose
- III. Standards
 - A. Digital Education Courses
 - B. Full-Time Digital Education
 - C. Supplemental Digital Education
- IV. Responsibilities
- V. Delegation of Authority
- VI. Definitions
- VII. References
- VIII. History

I. Policy Value Statement

The Board of Education of Howard County recognizes the value of digital education throughout the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). The Board values the need for expanded access to learning options through supplemental and full-time digital education. Digital education provides the opportunity to access education that might otherwise not be available or provides an alternative academic option for the student.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to specify criteria for digital education courses in HCPSS which will provide students equitable access to instructional resources and utilize technology to individualize learning.

III. Standards

- A. Digital Education Courses
 - 1. The HCPSS will implement national, state, and local requirements and best practices when developing, designing and reviewing digital education courses.
 - 2. Digital education courses will be aligned with HCPSS academic standards.
 - 3. HCPSS digital education eligibility requirements and course availability will be made available through the formal course scheduling process.

4. The HCPSS will use HCPSS employed teachers who meet established criteria for digital education to teach digital education courses. When a qualified HCPSS employed teacher is not available, the HCPSS may advertise for and establish a contract with an online learning provider to secure a non-HCPSS employed teacher.
5. Digital education students are subject to the grading, reporting, and eligibility guidelines outlined in Policy 8010 Grading and Reporting: Pre-Kindergarten Through Grade 5 and Policy 8020 Grading and Reporting: Middle and High School with necessary modifications.
6. All schools with students enrolled in digital education will designate school-based staff members to communicate student needs to the Digital Education Program Office.
7. The HCPSS will report the status of digital education annually.

B. Full-Time Digital Education

1. Digital education virtual programs are subject to all applicable federal and state laws and regulations.
2. Employees and students working in or enrolled in a digital education virtual program are subject to the same policies as HCPSS schools.
3. Enrollment in a digital education virtual program will be made available following the processes outlined in Policy 9000 Student Residency, Eligibility, Enrollment and Assignment.
4. Students enrolled in a digital education virtual program are required to maintain their enrollment for the entire school year unless the student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and the IEP team determines a placement change is necessary.
5. There are no fees for full-time digital education courses/virtual program courses as they are the student's primary instruction.
6. Students enrolled in digital education virtual programs will be provided access to HCPSS programs and services such as meals, extracurricular opportunities, special education and related services.

C. Supplemental Digital Education

1. The HCPSS will provide a fee schedule for HCPSS and non-HCPSS digital education supplemental courses.

2. All schools will provide supervision for students while enrolled in a supplemental digital education course at a physical school during the traditional school day.
3. Alternative programs will provide supervision for students enrolled in supplemental digital education outside of the traditional school day as appropriate.

IV. Responsibilities

- A. The HCPSS will establish criteria for course instruction for digital education courses.
- B. The HCPSS will assist digital education students to access the required hardware, software, and internet connectivity that are available to other HCPSS students.
- C. The Superintendent/designee will use program data to plan future course offerings and course delivery models available to HCPSS students, consistent with the standards outlined in Policy 8000 Curriculum.
- D. The Superintendent/designee will publish eligibility requirements and digital education course availability annually.
- E. The Superintendent/designee will communicate information annually regarding digital education courses to all students, parents, and employees.
- F. The Superintendent/designee will develop an annual report on the status of digital education in HCPSS.

V. Delegation of Authority

The Superintendent is authorized to develop procedures for the implementation of this policy.

VI. Definitions

Within the context of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- A. Alternative Programs – Intervention and Innovative Pathway Programs managed by the HCPSS Office of Program Innovation and Well-Being.
- B. Digital Education – The use of digital tools and technologies to deliver teaching and learning where the time, location and instructional method may differ from a traditional classroom.
- C. Digital Education Program Office – The department designated to implement digital education in the HCPSS.

- D. Digital Education Student – A student enrolled in a digital education course, or a digital education virtual program, delivered by a HCPSS teacher or another HCPSS-approved online learning provider.
- E. Digital Virtual Program – The education center providing full-time digital education for HCPSS students in grades K-12.
- F. Full-Time Digital Education – Where a HCPSS student in grades K-12 is taking the majority of their instruction through virtual learning.
- G. Non-HCPSS Employed Teacher – A certificated teacher provided by an online learning provider to teach digital education courses to HCPSS students.
- H. Online Learning Provider – A third-party vendor, institute of higher education or school district that provides digital education to students.
- I. Supplemental Digital Education – Where a HCPSS student in grades K-12 takes the majority of their instruction through traditional instruction at a HCPSS school and some of their instruction through digital education courses.
- J. Virtual Learning – A digital education instructional method where the majority (80% or more) of the instruction is synchronous.

VII. References

- A. Legal
 - The Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §7-14 Virtual Education
 - The Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §7-901, *et seq.*, Technology for Education
 - The Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §7-1002, Maryland Technology Academy
 - COMAR 13A.04.15, Digital Learning
- B. Other Board Policies
 - Policy 8000 Curriculum
 - Policy 8010 Grading and Reporting: Pre-Kindergarten Through Grade 5
 - Policy 8020 Grading and Reporting: Middle and High School
 - Policy 8080 Responsible Use of Technology, Digital Tools, and Social Media
 - Policy 9000 Student Residency, Eligibility, Enrollment and Assignment
 - Policy 9010 Attendance
- C. Relevant Data Sources
- D. Other
 - Catalog of Approved High School Courses
 - Catalog of Middle School Courses

HCPSS Device Agreement Form
HCPSS Student Code of Conduct

VIII. History¹

ADOPTED: January 12, 2017

REVIEWED:

MODIFIED: July 15, 2021

REVISED:

EFFECTIVE: July 15, 2021

¹ Key: *Adopted*-Original date the Board took action to approve a policy; *Reviewed*-The date the status of a policy was assessed by the Superintendent's Standing Policy Group; *Modified*-The date the Board took action to alter a policy that based on the recommendation of the Superintendent/designee did not require a comprehensive examination; *Revised*-The date the Board took action on a policy that based on the recommendation of the Superintendent/designee needed a comprehensive examination; *Effective*-The date a policy is implemented throughout the HCPSS, typically July 1 following Board action.

I. Course Access

- A. Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) students may be eligible to enroll in HCPSS supplemental digital education (blended, fully-online and virtual learning) under the following:
1. The school does not offer the course.
 2. There is a scheduling conflict which prevents the student from taking the course when it is available and there is no accessible alternative in future academic years.
 3. The student has been approved for early graduation or early college access demonstrated through their four-year plan.
 4. Home and Hospital Teaching Program.
 5. Administrative placement.
- B. HCPSS may establish an enrollment process for non-HCPSS students to apply to enroll in HCPSS supplemental digital education based on the number of available seats in published courses.
- C. HCPSS students may apply to enroll in a full-time digital education virtual program. Enrollment is based on the availability of courses and qualified teachers.
- D. The HCPSS may limit enrollments for all students based on the availability of courses and qualified teachers.
- E. The HCPSS will work with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), HCPSS Curriculum Offices and schools to determine course needs for the following school year.

II. Enrollment Requirements

- A. HCPSS offers two (2) forms of digital education with three (3) course options:
1. Supplemental Digital Education

- a. Blended Learning – A student may enroll in supplemental blended learning courses through their designated home school or HCPSS program outside of the school day or year. The school or program will advertise enrollment processes prior to enrollment.
- b. Fully-Online Learning – A student may enroll in up to two (2) supplemental, fully-online learning courses per single school year. The school will receive parent approval prior to enrollment, consistent with the HCPSS course scheduling process.
- c. Virtual Learning – A student may enroll in supplemental virtual learning courses during the school day at a HCPSS school. The school will work with the Digital Education Program Office to schedule students in courses, consistent with the HCPSS course scheduling process.

2. Full-time Digital Education

Virtual Learning – HCPSS students enrolled in full-time virtual learning courses through a digital education virtual program may take all of their courses virtually per single school year. The parent will apply for enrollment prior to the start of the school year.

- B. A student may exceed the registration course limit for fully-online learning courses with approval from the school administrator and the Digital Education Program Office.
- C. Students may enroll in a supplemental digital education course after the posted withdrawal deadline if they are able to complete the course requirements by the posted end date.
- D. Students who do not successfully earn credit in digital education courses, may be denied enrollment in future courses. Parents may appeal in writing to the school administrator and the Digital Education Program Office before enrolling.
- E. Credit recovery may be earned by students who complete a course where they were previously enrolled but did not earn credit. Students who are currently failing a course may participate in school-based interventions outside of the credit recovery program.
- F. Students may enroll in a digital education virtual program after the start of the academic year with administrative approval.
- G. Students enrolled in a digital education virtual program may elect to continue enrollment for the following school year or return to their designated home school.

III. Supervision, Attendance and Participation

- A. Schools may schedule students in supplemental digital education courses at a physical school during or outside the traditional school day. When a supplemental digital education course is scheduled during the school day, students will be supervised by school personnel.

School personnel supervising digital education students are responsible for:

1. Recording the digital education student's daily attendance.
 2. Ensuring the health, safety, and general welfare of students.
- B. Students enrolled in a digital education virtual program who come on-site to their designated home school to access an activity, program, or services will be supervised by school personnel at that school.
- C. Attendance for digital education courses will apply based on how and when the course is taken:
1. Supplemental Digital Education:
 - a. During the school day, digital education student's attendance follows the process outlined in Policy 9010 Attendance.
 - b. Outside the school day, digital education student's attendance is tracked for all required face-to-face sessions (orientation, proctored exams, course instruction, labs, etc.).
 - c. Policy 9010 Attendance does not apply to supplemental, blended or fully-online courses.
 2. Full-Time Digital Education:
 - a. Student attendance, while enrolled in a digital education virtual program, follows the process outlined in Policy 9010 Attendance for scheduled synchronous class sessions.
 - b. Policy 9010 Attendance does not apply to scheduled asynchronous work time.
- D. Participation requirements will be communicated to the digital education student prior to the beginning of the course.
1. Participation is defined as the degree to which the digital education student is making adequate progress toward completing the course requirements by the posted end date.

2. Digital education students in grades 6-12 who fail to participate in supplemental courses may be withdrawn from the digital education course in accordance with Policy 8020 Grading and Reporting: Middle and High School.
3. Parents of students who are not making progress in a digital education virtual program may request reassignment following the process outlined in Policy 9000 Student Residency, Eligibility, Enrollment and Assignment to request student reassignment to in-person instruction at their designated home school.
4. All students in all grade levels participating in assessed digital education courses will be required to take state mandated, district-selected and district-designed assessments and surveys.
 - a. Remote participation will be offered if allowed by the assessment or survey program.
 - b. Students will be required to attend in-person testing sessions at a designated school/site to complete assessments or surveys that do not offer remote participation.
 - c. When students are unable to attend in-person sessions, arrangements will be made to administer assessments or surveys by staff in an appropriate setting.

IV. Fees

- A. There are no fees for full-time digital education courses as they are the student's primary instruction.
- B. The HCPSS will provide a fee schedule for HCPSS and non-HCPSS digital education supplemental courses, which may include application fees, course material fees or tuition.
 1. HCPSS students who meet the eligibility requirements are not responsible for course fees.
 2. HCPSS students who do not meet the eligibility requirements, or exceed the registration course limit, may enroll in additional approved courses with an online learning provider under a separate agreement that requires the parent to pay any tuition or course fees.
 3. Non-HCPSS students enrolled in HCPSS digital education will be charged a fee based on the fee schedule.

- C. Fees for supplemental courses are non-refundable unless otherwise specified in the fee schedule. The schedule will include options for tuition reduction based on student circumstance.

V. Curriculum Review, Design and Development

The HCPSS will use the following to inform digital education courses:

- A. The curriculum standards for HCPSS digital education courses will be the same used for all HCPSS schools.
- B. In order to offer fully-online courses, the HCPSS will comply with COMAR. In the event a fully-online course has not been approved by MSDE, the HCPSS may conduct a review and submit its results to MSDE for approval.
- C. The course expectations for student-to-teacher communication and academic support meet nationally recognized professional standards and are described as such in a course syllabus.

VI. Teacher Criteria

- A. HCPSS teachers teaching supplemental or full-time courses will meet the certification requirements determined by the MSDE and HCPSS. Teachers will complete required professional learning with a focus on digital teaching and learning.
- B. HCPSS teachers teaching a fully-online course will meet the following criteria:
 - 1. Completed online teaching preparation course.
 - 2. Completed a digital education mentoring experience.
- C. The HCPSS will include the following contract language with the online learning provider when using non-HCPSS teachers to teach fully-online courses:
 - 1. Hold a state-level certification in the content area (for AP courses, have met the criteria for AP courses).
 - 2. Completed online teaching preparation course.
 - 3. Received satisfactory evaluation from the online learning provider.
- D. Additional staff may work with digital education students in a supporting role (site-based mentor, supervising teacher, paraeducator, special educator, etc.). Supporting staff may not grade student work but may provide other academic and non-academic supports.
- E. The delivery of instruction begins when the digital education student interacts with the digital education teacher and related digital content and receives ongoing

assistance and assessment of learning. The instruction may include approved curriculum developed by HCPSS or online learning providers.

VII. School Responsibilities

- A. Designated home schools will provide programs and services such as meals, extracurricular opportunities, special education and related services to students enrolled in digital education virtual programs. Some services may be provided at a physical location through a face-to-face provider as determined by the Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The digital education virtual program will designate staff to coordinate services with the appropriate staff from the student's designated home school.
- B. HCPSS schools will provide school-based staff members to work with the Digital Education Program Office. Identified school staff will assist in disseminating information regarding digital education to students, parents, school staff and administration. Staff may also facilitate:
 - 1. Site-based mentoring.
 - 2. Scheduling digital education student supervision.
 - 3. Monitoring academic progress.
- C. Responsibilities can be shared between an administrator and school staff. Schools will match staff members with the responsibilities that best meet the needs of the students and the school.
- D. For supplemental digital education courses, the school will provide information on a student's progress and final credits earned to the student and the student's parent.
- E. For full-time digital education courses, the Digital Education Program Office staff will provide information on a student's progress and final credits earned to the student and the student's parent.

VIII. Technology Access

- A. Students using a personal device or HCPSS-owned device are responsible for the use of the device in accordance with Policy 8080 Responsible Use of Technology, Digital Tools, and Social Media and the HCPSS Student Code of Conduct.
- B. Students using an HCPSS-owned device are required to complete an HCPSS Device Agreement Form.

IX. Grading and Progress Reporting

- A. Grading and progress reporting for digital education courses will apply based on how and when the course is taken:

1. Supplemental Digital Education:

- a. Students enrolled in supplemental digital education synchronous courses during the school day are subject to grading, reporting, and eligibility guidelines outlined in Policy 8010 Grading and Reporting: Pre-Kindergarten Through Grade 5 and Policy 8020 Grading and Reporting: Middle and High School.
- b. Students enrolled in supplemental digital education asynchronous blended and fully-online courses are subject to grading, reporting, and eligibility guidelines outlined in Policy 8010 Grading and Reporting: Pre-Kindergarten Through Grade 5 and Policy 8020 Grading and Reporting: Middle and High School with modifications, such as:
 - i. Marking Period
 - a. The start and end dates for course instruction may be different than the traditional school calendar.
 - b. Marking period grades will be earned by semester.
 - ii. End of Semester Examinations

End of semester examinations may be scheduled at a time outside the traditional school calendar exam window.
 - iii. Reporting

Course names are listed on interim and quarterly report cards; however, grades are only included on the final report card.

2. Full-Time Digital Education

Students enrolled in a digital education virtual program are subject to grading, reporting, and eligibility guidelines outlined in Policy 8010 Grading and Reporting: Pre-Kindergarten Through Grade 5 and Policy 8020 Grading and Reporting: Middle and High School.

- a. Digital education virtual program courses may be scheduled as a semester or full-year option which may differ from the schedule at the student's designated home school.
- b. If a student is reassigned from a digital education virtual program to their designated home school during the school year, their grades will be averaged proportionately with classroom grades where possible.

- B. When a course is taken as a combination of traditional face-to-face courses and digital education, the digital education grades are averaged proportionately with classroom grades and placed on the report card.
- C. When a course is taken as credit recovery, the final grade from taking the course originally and for retaking the course will both be included in the cumulative GPA and will be recorded on the transcript.
- D. Digital education students are expected to monitor their own progress daily. Parents and school counselors may receive progress reports through the student, the digital education virtual program, the Digital Education Program Office, or the online learning provider.

X. Program Reporting

- A. The HCPSS will prepare a yearly digital education status update that may include the following:
 - 1. Number of digital education student enrollment.
 - 2. Number and type of courses taken.
 - 3. Completion/retention data.
 - 4. Stakeholder survey data.
 - 5. HCPSS digital education teacher summary.
 - 6. Non-HCPSS digital education teacher summary.
- B. The HCPSS will review and evaluate the course delivery models available to HCPSS students.

XI. Definitions

Within the context of these implementation procedures, the following definitions apply:

- A. Asynchronous – When learning occurs in elapsed time and where the teacher and student do not share the same physical location.
- B. Blended Learning – A digital education instructional method where instruction is a combination of asynchronous and synchronous with less than 80 percent of the instruction asynchronous.
- C. Credit Recovery – Credit awarded for the completion of a course where the student was previously enrolled but did not earn credit.
- D. Designated Home School – The school appointed by virtue of a student’s attendance area as outlined in Policy 9000 Student Residency, Eligibility, Enrollment and Assignment.

- E. Fully-Online Learning – A digital education instructional method where the majority (80 percent or more) of the instruction is asynchronous.
- F. Parent – Any one of the following, recognized as the adult(s) legally responsible for the student:
 - 1. Biological Parent – A natural parent whose parental rights have not been terminated.
 - 2. Adoptive Parent – A person who has legally adopted the student and whose parental rights have not been terminated.
 - 3. Custodian – A person or agency appointed by the court as the legal custodian of the student and granted parental rights and responsibilities.
 - 4. Guardian – A person who has been placed by the court in charge of the affairs of the student and granted parental rights and responsibilities.
 - 5. Caregiver – An adult resident of Howard County who exercises care, custody, or control over the student but who is neither the biological parent nor legal guardian, as long as the person satisfies the requirements of the Education Article, §7-101 (c) (Informal Kinship Care) or has been issued a U.S. Department of Health and Human Service’s Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Verification of Release form entering into a custodial arrangement with the federal government.
 - 6. Foster Parent – An adult approved to care for a child who has been placed in their home by a state agency or a licensed child placement agency as provided by the Family Law Article, §5-507.
- G. Synchronous – When students communicate with the teacher in real time but may not share the same physical location.
- H. Virtual Learning – A digital education instructional method where the majority (80% or more) of the instruction is synchronous.

XII. History¹

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