

Policy Outline

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I. Policy Value Statement

The Board of Education of Howard County (Board) is committed to providing a well-rounded program of education-based student activities for high school students as a complement to the academic program. The Board further recognizes that to best carry out the vision and mission of the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS), extracurricular activities will not, in any way, supplant academics as the primary focus of the HCPSS.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish minimum academic criteria that must be met by high school students in order to be eligible to participate in school-sponsored extracurricular activities.

III. Standards

- A. This policy governs minimum academic eligibility for student participation in extracurricular activities for which there is a HCPSS contracted sponsor. There are no academic eligibility standards for extracurricular activities participation when participation is required as part of a course.
- B. For high school, a full-time student earns academic eligibility to participate in extracurricular activities by maintaining a 2.0 grade-point average (GPA), calculated using credit or non-credit courses, with no more than two failing grades. Eligibility is based on marking period grades as described in Section III.C. below. This provision does not apply to incoming 9th grade students for fall eligibility.

- C. The marking periods for academic eligibility are determined by the following:
1. Interscholastic Athletics
 - a. Fall sport eligibility – For incoming 9th grade students, all students are eligible for fall athletics. For all returning students, eligibility is determined by the marking period grades of the preceding June unless eligibility is achieved through the completion of summer school courses as indicated in Section III.F. below.
 - b. Winter sport eligibility – Determined by the grades earned on the most immediately preceding marking period prior to November 15.
 - c. Spring sport eligibility – Determined by the grades earned on the most immediately preceding marking period prior to March 1.
 2. Other Extracurricular Activities
 - a. Activities, such as try-outs or auditions for plays, announcing candidacy for elective office are governed by the marking period most immediately preceding the start of the activity.
 - b. In the case of non-required trips by performing groups, the marking period most immediately preceding the trip will govern.
- D. Weighted grades will be used for academic eligibility for extracurricular activities, including high school athletics.
1. Incomplete grades must be converted to a letter grade to determine eligibility. (Policy 8020 Grading and Reporting: Middle and High School)
 2. If a student withdraws from a course, the grades at the time of withdrawal will be used in determining academic eligibility.
- E. These marking period criteria will be followed in addition to Section III.B. above.
1. Seasonal:
 - a. Each extracurricular activity is governed by the most immediately preceding marking period.
 - b. A student must earn academic eligibility prior to the start of the activity.
 - c. Once academic eligibility has been determined, the student remains academically eligible for the duration of that activity season (e.g., basketball season).
 2. Yearlong:
 - a. In the cases of yearlong activities or those which do not have a particular time frame, eligibility will be reviewed at the end of each marking period during which the student participates.

- b. In cases of yearlong activities or those which do not have a particular time frame, if a student is academically ineligible prior to the start of the activity, their eligibility will be reviewed at the end of each marking period.
 - c. For those activities, such as a theatrical performance, a student who has not earned academic eligibility prior to the start of the activity may not become eligible during the course of the activity.
- F. Students making progress towards graduation, by being promoted from the prior grade level in the summer before the current school year, who are not eligible, may receive a one-time waiver to participate in any one season of athletics or extracurriculars. They must complete a request including why they are ineligible and what they will do to become eligible in the future. HCPSS staff will review the request and make plans with the student and their parents for one time eligibility.
- G. Students who have less than a 2.0 GPA with no more than two failing grades for the final marking period may attend summer school and raise the appropriate grade and the GPA to gain eligibility for fall interscholastic athletics and other extracurricular activities. HCPSS authorized summer school courses taken in order to gain academic eligibility to participate in extracurricular activities must be approved in advance by the principal/designee. (Policy 8020 Grading and Reporting: Middle and High School).
- H. Students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan
 - 1. A student with an IEP may receive a waiver of academic ineligibility from the local school IEP Team only if it is determined that failure to meet the academic eligibility requirement is a direct result of not providing Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and that the failure to provide FAPE led to the student being academically ineligible. Such a determination by the IEP Team is to be reported immediately to the school principal who will then certify the student's eligibility to participate in extracurricular activities.
 - 2. A student with a Section 504 Plan may receive a waiver of academic ineligibility from the local Section 504 Team when it is determined that FAPE was not provided, and that the failure to provide FAPE led to the student being academically ineligible. Such a determination by the Section 504 Team is to be reported immediately to the school principal who will then certify the student's eligibility to participate in extracurricular activities.
- I. Appeals of decisions to withdraw students based on fraudulent residency or custody documents will be addressed to the Superintendent/designee. Students involved in extracurricular activities are not permitted to participate during the appeal process.

IV. Responsibilities

- A. A student participating in athletics and their parent will certify the student's academic eligibility by signing the HCPSS participation form prior to participation.

- B. Sponsors will verify the academic eligibility of each student who desires to participate in a nonathletic extracurricular activity prior to the first activity participation.
- C. Athletic coaches will verify the academic eligibility of each athlete who desires to participate on their team prior to the tryouts.
- D. Athletics and Activities Managers (AAM) will verify the academic eligibility of each athlete participating on athletic teams at their school prior to the first game.
- E. The principal/designee will certify that all students participating in a nonathletic extracurricular activity meet academic eligibility requirements prior to the first activity.
- F. The principal/designee will certify that each athlete representing their school meets the HCPSS's academic eligibility requirements prior to the first game.
- G. The Superintendent/designee will provide a list of system-paid sponsors.

V. Delegation of Authority

The Superintendent is authorized to develop appropriate procedures for the implementation of this policy within the limits set forth by this policy.

VI. Definitions

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

- A. Extracurricular Activities – Activities, available to students beyond the regular school day, which are voluntary and not required for the satisfactory completion of a particular class.
- B. Education-Based Student Activities – Approved extracurricular activities that promote learning while contributing to the educational program of the HCPSS and to the development of good citizenship.
- C. Fall Sports Season – The Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) August start date until the final date of the county, conference, district, regional, or State tournament.
- D. Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) – Provision of regular or special education and related aids and services designed to meet a student's individual educational needs.
- E. Grade Point Average (GPA) – Numerical representation, weighted or unweighted, of a grade measuring a student's overall performance across courses taken for a specific period of time. There are two types of GPAs:

1. Marking Period GPA
 2. Cumulative GPA
- F. Individualized Education Program (IEP) – A written description of the special education and related services for a student with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised by the student’s IEP Team.
- G. Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team – A group of individuals, including the parent, responsible for identifying and evaluating students with disabilities. The IEP Team develops, reviews, and/or revises an IEP for a student with a disability and determines placement in the least restrictive environment.
- H. Marking Period – A segment of the school year during which instruction is delivered, student progress is monitored, and grades are given.
- I. 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 an agency appointed by the court as the legal custodian of the student and granted parental rights and responsibilities.
 4. Guardian – A person who had 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 Services’ 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.
- J. Section 504 Plan – A written document developed for an eligible student that allows the student to receive a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.

- K. Section 504 Team – A group of individuals possessing knowledge of a student, the student’s evaluation data, placement options, Section 504, and this policy. The team may consist of the student’s parent, the student him/herself, the student’s teacher, the school counselor, the case manager, the principal/designee, and the school-based professional qualified to interpret the implications of evaluations.
- L. Spring Sports Season – March 1 until the final date of the local conference, district, regional, or State tournament. When March 1 falls on Sunday, practice will start the preceding Saturday.
- M. Winter Sports Season – November 15 until the final date of the local conference, district, regional, or State tournament. When November 15 falls on Sunday, practice will start the preceding Saturday.

VII. References

- A. Legal
 - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
 - Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
 - Md. Ann. Code, Education Article §5-112
 - Md. Ann. Code, Education Article §7-101 (c) Kinship Care
 - Family Law Article §5-507
- B. Board Policies
 - Policy 7120 Selection of Coaches and Advisors of High School Extracurricular Activities
 - Policy 8020 Grading and Reporting: Middle and High School
 - Policy 9000 Student Residency, Eligibility, Enrollment and Assignment
 - Policy 9060 Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Compliance: Section 504
 - Policy 9080 Interscholastic Athletic Program
- C. Relevant Data Sources
 - ASPEN Sports and Activities Ineligibility report
- D. Other
 - Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Recommendations on Minimum Standards for Participation in Interscholastic Sports
 - The Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) Report
 - Master Agreement Between the Board of Education and the Howard County Education Association

VIII. History¹

ADOPTED: July 23, 1981
REVIEWED: December 13, 2018
MODIFIED:
REVISED: May 9, 1991
January 28, 1993
August 22, 1996
May 25, 2000
January 27, 2005
April 25, 2013
November 7, 2024
EFFECTIVE: July 1, 2025

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.

**ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY FOR HIGH SCHOOL
EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**Effective: July 1, 2025

I. Summer School

- A. For calculating eligibility, review and original credit course grades earned in summer school will be used in lieu of the grade earned in the same course during the fourth marking period of the same school year.
 - 1. A student may enroll in an original credit course in summer school for the purpose of receiving full credit for the course if the student has completed the eighth grade and has never been enrolled in the course or has previously been enrolled in the course and failed more than two quarters.
 - 2. A student may enroll in a review credit course in summer school if the student has completed the course and passed at least two quarters.
 - 3. Fourth quarter eligibility is determined by courses from the current school year. Students may not take additional courses over the summer beyond credit recovery to improve their grade point average (GPA).
- B. Determining eligibility using summer school grades:
 - 1. Substitute grades earned in summer school (review and/or original credit).
 - 2. Compute new GPA and check for no more than two failing grades.
 - 3. Students become eligible if the new GPA is 2.0 or above and no more than two failing grades remain.

II. Transfer Students

- A. Within County
A student transferring to a different school within Howard County will use the grade report from the prior school to determine eligibility for that specific activity.
- B. Out of County
A student moving into the county who wishes to participate in extracurricular activities must meet the eligibility requirements of this policy. The student's eligibility will be determined by the student's grades during the last full quarter of attendance in their previous school.

III. Students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP)

- A. If a student with an IEP becomes academically ineligible to participate in extracurricular activities, the student and/or their parent may contact the principal of the school and request convening an IEP Team meeting to determine whether or not the student's ineligibility is the direct result of not being provided a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and that the failure to provide FAPE led to the student being academically ineligible.
- B. The IEP Team will convene at the earliest possible date following receipt of a request.
 - 1. In the case of athletic activities, the student may begin practicing with the team once the request is made to the principal. The student may not participate in any games until the IEP Team determines that ineligibility should be waived.
 - 2. In the case of nonathletic activities, the student may begin participating in preparatory activities (e.g., practices, rehearsals, etc.) once the request is made to the principal. The student may not participate in special events associated with that activity (e.g., performances, field trips, etc.) until the IEP Team determines that ineligibility should be waived.
- C. The IEP Team will make a determination as to whether or not the student's academic ineligibility is a direct result of not being provided a FAPE and the failure to provide FAPE led to the students being academically ineligible. The IEP Team will notify the principal immediately of the determination.
 - 1. If the IEP Team determines that the student's ineligibility is due to not being provided FAPE and that the failure to provide FAPE led to the student being academically ineligible the principal will grant a waiver and declare the student eligible. The student may begin full participation in the extracurricular activities immediately.
 - 2. If the IEP Team determines that FAPE was provided, then the student is not eligible to continue further participation in extracurricular activities.

IV. Students with a Section 504 Plan

- A. If a student with a Section 504 Plan becomes academically ineligible to participate in extracurricular activities, the student and/or their parent may contact the principal of the school to request that the local Section 504 Team convene to determine whether a failure to provide the student FAPE led to the student's ineligibility.
- B. The Section 504 Team will convene at the earliest possible date following receipt of a request.

1. In the case of athletic activities, the student may begin practicing with the team once the request is made to the principal. The student may not participate in any games until and unless the Section 504 Team determines that the ineligibility should be waived.
 2. In the case of nonathletic activities, the student may begin participating in the preparatory activities (e.g., practices, rehearsals, etc.) once the request is made to the principal. The student may not participate in special events associated with the activity (e.g., performances, field trips, etc.) until the Section 504 Team determines that the ineligibility should be waived.
- C. The Section 504 Team will make a determination as to whether a failure to provide the student FAPE led to the student's ineligibility and will notify the principal immediately of that determination.
1. If the Section 504 Team determines that FAPE was not provided and led to the student being ineligible, the principal will grant the waiver and declare the student eligible. The student may begin full participation in extracurricular activities immediately.
 2. If the Section 504 Team determines that ineligibility is not a result of a failure to provide FAPE, the student is not eligible to continue further participation.

V. Monitoring

Policy 9070 implementation procedures will be overseen by the Division of Schools.

VI. History¹

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