

I. Policy Statement

The Board of Education of Howard County is committed to ensuring that all students learn and that students, parents, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders are provided meaningful feedback on student achievement. Grading, reporting, promotion, and retention within the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) are based on the individual student's mastery of curriculum standards. Additionally, the Board supports students in maintaining and extending their learning through the use of homework as part of the curricular program.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines to ensure that information on grading, reporting, promotion, retention, and homework is determined in a clear and consistent manner, and is reported to students and their families through regular and timely communication that accurately reflects the student's mastery of standards.

III. Definitions

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

- A. 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.
- B. Accelerated Grade Placement – The movement of a student out of the normal progression to an advanced grade.
- C. Assessment – An evaluation of what students know and/or can do.
- D. Comment – Written statement indicating student performance in subject areas, social and emotional learning behaviors, and/or personal work habits.
- E. Curriculum – The prescribed elements of programs and courses which state clearly and specifically what students are expected to know and be able to do, how well they will be able to do it, how they will meet the curriculum standards, and by what means they will be assessed.
- F. Curriculum Standards – The learning outcomes that students are expected to master, which reflect the best knowledge of the developmental needs of learners, and that comply with requirements from local policy and state law.

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- G. Individualized Education Program (IEP) – A written plan for a student with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised by the IEP team.
- H. Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team – A group of individuals 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.
- I. Grade – A measure of performance related to achievement of course standards.
- J. Homework – An assignment to be completed outside of scheduled school hours.
- K. Interim/Progress Report – A report reflecting the progress of a student through the date of issuance.
- L. Lawful (Excused) Absence – An absence for any portion of the day under the following conditions:
1. Death in the immediate family
 2. Illness of the student
 3. Pregnancy and parenting needs
 4. Court summons
 5. Hazardous weather conditions
 6. Work approved or sponsored by the school
 7. Observance of a religious holiday
 8. State emergency
 9. Suspension
 10. Lack of authorized transportation
 11. Other emergency or set of circumstances which, in the judgment of the Superintendent or designee, constitutes a good and sufficient cause for absence from school.
- M. Marking Period – A segment of the school year during which instruction is delivered, student pupil progress is monitored, and grades are given.
- N. 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 a U.S. Department of Health and Human Service’s Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) issued Verification of Release form entering into custodial arrangement with the federal government.
 6. Foster Parent – An adult approved to care for a child who has been placed in the home by a state agency or a licensed child placement agency as provided by the Family Law Article, §5-507.
- O. Promotion – The normal progression of a student from one grade to the next based upon successful completion of coursework.
- P. Report Card – Document that records the student’s grades, attendance, comments and other information.
- Q. Retention – The act of continuing a student in a current grade based upon unsuccessful completion of coursework.
- R. School/Grade Team – A group composed of teachers, counselors, the school principal or other administrators, and other appropriate staff personnel.
- S. Social and Emotional Learning – The process through which students acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.
- T. Special Education – Specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a student with a disability, including instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings.
- U. Unlawful (Unexcused) Absence – An absence, including absence for any portion of the day, for any reason other than those cited as lawful are presumed as unlawful and may constitute truancy.

IV. Standards

- A. Grading – The grading system is used to reflect student achievement of Prekindergarten-5 includes letter grades, effort codes/comments, and instructional levels.

1. Grades

Grades reported on interim/progress reports and on the report card at the end of each marking period in Prekindergarten-5 are derived from a compilation of assessments from that entire marking period up to the point of the progress report or report card.

Grades in Prekindergarten-5 reflect curriculum standards with the following:

a. Grades in Prekindergarten-2 are the following:

I-Independent

W-With Assistance

N-Not apparent at this time

b. Grades in 3-5 are the following:

A (90-100%) – Outstanding level

B (80-89%) – High level

C (70-79%) – Satisfactory level

D (60-69%) – Low level

E (59% or lower) – Failure

Percent scores are rounded to the nearest whole number. Anything below .5 rounds down, and anything .5 and above rounds up.

Ex. 1: 89.49% rounds to 89.

Ex. 2: 89.50% rounds to 90.

c. Student grades may not be subject to percentage grade reduction for lateness to class, absence, behavior or disciplinary action. Such actions could impact the final grade, however, in an indirect manner because of missed work and incomplete assignments.

d. In computing numerical averages from letter grades, the following equivalents will be used:

A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, E = 0

2. Learning Behaviors will not be scored.

3. Related Arts courses will only be graded twice a year – during Q2 and Q4; Q1 and Q3 will serve in the place of interim reports and only be used if something needs to be communicated to parents/guardians.

4. Instructional levels for reading and math are as follows:

- a. For grades 1-5 reading, the following instructional levels are assigned based on objectives from the essential curriculum:
- i. For grades 1-2 reading, the instructional level (above, on, or below grade level) is based on the student's current level of reading performance as determined by approved assessments in word identification and comprehension.
 - ii. For grades 3-5 reading, the instructional level is based on the following:

ABOVE GRADE LEVEL

If, in general, the student

- Reads a variety of materials independently that are on and above grade level.
- Demonstrates comprehension by earning, at minimum, twos on a zero to three rubric for written responses to reading questions.
- Responds orally with adequately developed answers to reading questions.
- Performs at the satisfactory or excellent level on county mandated reading assessments.
- Performs at the proficient or advanced level on state mandated reading assessments.

ON GRADE LEVEL

If, in general, the student

- Reads a variety of materials independently that are on grade level.
- Demonstrates comprehension by earning mostly twos on a zero to three rubric for written responses to reading questions.
- Responds orally with adequately developed answers to reading questions.
- Performs at the satisfactory level on county mandated reading assessments.
- Performs at the proficient level on state mandated reading assessments.

BELOW GRADE LEVEL

If, in general, the student

- Is unable to read grade level materials independently.
- Fails to demonstrate comprehension by earning mostly zeros or ones on a zero to three rubric for written responses to reading questions.
- Responds orally with undeveloped answers to reading questions.
- Performs at the not-yet-satisfactory level on county mandated reading assessments.
- Performs at the basic level on state mandated reading assessments.

- b. For 1-5 in mathematics, the instructional codes/comments (above, on, or below grade level) are assigned as follows:

ABOVE GRADE LEVEL

If, in general, the student

- Demonstrates satisfactory performance on the above-grade level objectives from the HCPSS Curriculum by scoring at least 70% on assessments following instruction.
- Performs at the satisfactory or excellent level on county mathematics assessments.
- Performs at the proficient or advanced level on state mandated mathematics assessments.

ON GRADE LEVEL

If, in general, the student

- Demonstrates satisfactory performance on the grade level objectives from the HCPSS Curriculum by scoring at least 70% on assessments following instruction.
- Performs at the satisfactory level on county mathematics assessments.
- Performs at the proficient level on state mandated mathematics assessments.

BELOW GRADE LEVEL

- If, in general, the student
- Demonstrates unsatisfactory performance on the grade level objectives from the HCPSS Curriculum by scoring consistently lower than 70% on grade level assessments following instruction.
- Performs at the not-yet-satisfactory level on county mathematics assessments.
- Performs at the basic level on state mandated mathematics assessments.

5. Make-Up Work
 - a. A student may make up and receive a recorded grade for work missed due to a lawful absence or field trip attendance. Students returning from lawful absences or field trips will have an equal number of days to complete make up work.
 - b. A student may make up work but will not receive a recorded grade for work missed due to an unlawful absence.
 - c. For course content grades, students may redo make up work assignments to demonstrate a satisfactory level of mastery at a minimum.
6. Prompt feedback is essential for developing student understanding. The grading and return of student work will occur within three weeks, in class or in the learning management system.
7. Student grades may not be subject to a reduction for lateness to class, absence, behavior or disciplinary action. Such actions could impact the final grade,

however, in an indirect manner because of missed work and incomplete assignments.

8. Grading of Homework

Homework is not graded in Prekindergarten-5 although feedback is given.

9. Extra credit is not offered in Prekindergarten-5. However, students will be provided with opportunities to recover credit and demonstrate mastery through other relevant coursework, as appropriate.

10. Grading of Group Assignments

- a. The grade that each member of the group receives will reflect his or her own contributions to the group assignment.
- b. Recognizing that it is unfair for students to be graded on the quality of work that is not their own, students will not be graded on the quality of the project as a whole.

B. Reporting

On a regular basis, school staff will communicate to the students and parents the level of the student's achievement in each subject area. Communication will take the following forms:

1. Report Cards

- a. Report cards are issued at the conclusion of each marking period and will reflect all work completed during that marking period unless otherwise indicated by the teacher.
- b. Parents will be informed of the report card distribution dates.

2. Interim Reports will not be completed.

3. Conferences

- a. Parent-teacher conference days are determined by the Board of Education and are identified on the school system calendar each year. These are opportunities for the parents to meet with each teacher to discuss the progress that the student is making and to discuss interventions or assistance being recommended to ensure the child achieves.
- b. Parents may contact the teacher or administrator to arrange additional conference times with a teacher or the administrator.
- c. Conferences may or may not include the student, at the parent's discretion.

4. Retention Notification

Parents will be notified in writing (by a letter to their home address) if a student is at risk of being retained in a grade. This notification may occur as early as the end of the second marking period but no later than the end of the third marking period.

C. Academic Intervention

When the performance of any K-5 student is below expectations, the teacher and/or grade level team will, with the knowledge and appropriate participation of parents, develop strategies and apply appropriate academic interventions to assist the student with achievement.

D. Promotion, Retention, and Accelerated Grade Placement

1. Promotion

- a. Students in prekindergarten will be promoted at the end of the school year. Students granted early admission to prekindergarten will be considered for promotion to kindergarten after successful completion of prekindergarten.
- b. Students in K-5 will be promoted on successful completion of the curriculum in language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and health.

2. Retention

- a. For any K-5 student:
 - i. The principal may decide, upon recommendation of the school/grade level team with parent input, to retain students based on academic performance.
 - ii. A parent may request that a principal consider retention of a student.
 - iii. The IEP team shall consider the possible retention of a diploma-bound special education student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
 - iv. The provisions of this policy do not apply to a certificate-bound special education student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
 - v. If a principal is considering retaining a student, s/he will notify the student's parents of their concerns by the first week of the 3rd marking period.
- b. Students in grade K through grade 5 not meeting requirements for promotion will be considered for retention. A student considered for retention may be recommended to attend summer school.

3. Accelerated Grade Placement

- a. A principal may, upon the recommendation of a school/grade team or parent, accelerate a student to an advanced full grade level when the student demonstrates the ability to achieve at a higher level than expected in the curriculum standards and as measured by quarterly, teacher made and other assessments, and by teacher observations.
- b. The principal will decide whether to accelerate the student to an advanced full grade level based on a number of factors, which may include, but are not limited to the following:
 - Academic achievement level
 - Age of the student
 - Previous accelerations
 - Attendance record
 - Parental concerns
 - Social and emotional developmental learning
 - Health factors
 - Report card
 - IEP
 - 504 Plan
- c. Students will not be accelerated to advanced grades against the wishes of their parent.

E. Homework

1. Homework will be purposeful, appropriate, informational, and flexible.
 - a. Purposeful: Students understand why they are completing homework. Homework is grounded in and expands upon skills and knowledge students have learned in the classroom.
 - b. Appropriate: Homework should be designed so that all students can experience success in independent completion of assignments. Accommodations will be provided as outlined in students' IEPs and Section Plans on homework.
 - c. Informational: Homework enables parents to be included in their child's day-to-day school experiences.
 - d. Flexible: Assignments can be successfully completed within timeframes that have flexible deadlines when possible.

2. Homework processes will be communicated with all stakeholders.
 - a. Each school year, schools will provide information to parents about the school's homework procedures.
 - b. Teachers are required to ensure that homework is accommodated/modified as necessary in accordance with students' IEPs and 504 Plans.
 - c. Teachers will provide feedback on homework assignments.
 - d. No mandatory homework assignments are to be given only electronically.
 - e. No mandatory homework assignments will require access to home-based internet or computers for either the completion or the submission of the work.
 - f. No homework assignments will be due on a day schools are closed due to inclement weather.
 - g. There will be no mandatory homework given over the summer for all grade levels, nor winter or spring breaks for students in grades Prekindergarten-5.
 - h. A student may make up and receive a recorded grade for homework not completed due to the observance of a religious holiday. Students returning from a religious holiday observance will have an equal number of days to complete make-up work.

3. Amount and Purpose of Homework
 - a. Grades Prekindergarten-Kindergarten
 - i. Amount: No more than 20 minutes of homework per night will be assigned in total.
 - ii. Purpose: Homework provides practice opportunities for skill development. There will be no assignments that must be submitted to the teacher.
 - iii. Teaching staff will be provided with opportunities to meet as teams to schedule assignments so that students do not regularly have more than 20 minutes of homework each night.

 - b. Grades 1-2
 - i. Amount: No more than 20 minutes of homework per night will be assigned.
 - ii. Purpose: Homework provides practice opportunities for skill development.
 - iii. Teaching staff will be provided with opportunities to meet as teams to schedule assignments so that students do not regularly have more than 20 minutes of homework each night.

 - c. Grades 3-5
 - i. Amount: No more than 30 minutes required per night in grade 3; 40 minutes in grade 4; and 50 minutes in grade 5.

- ii. Purpose: Homework reflects daily instruction, reinforces previously taught skills, prepares students for future lessons, and/or promotes creativity.
- iii. Teaching staff will be provided with opportunities to meet as teams to schedule assignments so that students do not regularly have more than 30 minutes required per night in grade 3; 40 minutes in grade 4; and 50 minutes in grade 5.

V. Responsibilities

- A. Principals will communicate annually information regarding promotion, retention, and accelerated grade placement, and homework to all students, parents, and staff.
- B. The principal will make decisions regarding promotion, retention and accelerated grade placement, with input from the appropriate school/grade level team and based on a student's performance and academic progress over the entire school year.
- C. School staff will communicate information related to academic performance to parents and students and for developing, implementing, and monitoring strategies to improve achievement for students performing below grade level expectations.

VI. Delegation of Authority

The Superintendent is directed to develop procedures to implement this policy.

VII. References

- A. Legal
 - Title 7-301 State Board of Education; Subtitle 3., Compulsory Attendance
 - State Bylaw COMAR 13A.08.01.02 Lawful Cause of Absence
 - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. §1400 et seq.
 - Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. §794 et seq.
 - COMAR 13A.08.01.03
 - COMAR 13A.08.01.04
- B. Other Board Policies
 - 8000 Curriculum
 - 8020 Grading and Reporting: Middle and High School
 - 9010 Attendance
 - 9060 Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Compliance: Section 504
 - 9070 Academic Eligibility for High School Extracurricular Activities
- C. Relevant Data Sources
- D. Other

VIII. History

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