

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. The Board views grading, reporting, and homework as part of an ongoing conversation about student academic progress with students and their families.

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 reported to students and their families through regular and timely communication about student academic progress.

III. Definitions

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

- A. 504 Plan – A written document specifying the reasonable accommodations that allow a student with a disability to participate in school and school-related activities.
- 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. Class Rank – The relative position of a student in his/her graduation class based upon a cumulative grade point average.
- E. Code – A letter used to reflect the academic history of a student.
- F. Course – A planned sequence of instruction related to a specific subject delivered at an HCPSS school during the school day and within the school year. The content of an HCPSS course is determined by the curriculum standards.

- G. Course Level – An indication of the challenge of a given course. Course levels may include advanced placement (AP), gifted & talented (GT), honors (H), and regular. Based on course content, not all courses are offered at each of the different levels (for example, there is not Latin I GT).
- H. Credit – Unit of achievement awarded for the completion of a course and the successful demonstration of established instructional objectives and standards of performance for the course.
- I. Credit By Exam – Credit awarded to a student who does not complete a course but successfully demonstrates knowledge of established curriculum standards by passing an assessment.
- J. 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.
- K. 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.
- L. Grade – A letter indicating a measure of performance and related to achievement of course objectives.
- M. 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
- N. Homework – Assigned work to be completed outside the scheduled school hours.
- O. 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.
- P. 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 in the least restrictive environment.
- Q. 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.
- R. Marking Period – A segment of the school year during which instruction is delivered, student progress is monitored, and grades are given.
- S. Non-traditional Course – An HCPSS course taught at a location, time, delivery method differing from the standard course structure. The content of a non-traditional course may include other curriculum standards outside of the HCPSS curriculum standards. Courses eligible for dual enrollment credit taught in a high school building during the traditional school day may also be considered non-traditional and have a weighting structure that aligns with the institute of higher education partner’s accreditation standards.
- T. Official Records – A student’s report card and Student Records Systems card.
- U. 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.
- V. Promotion – The normal progression of a student from one grade level to the next based upon successful completion of coursework.
- W. Quality Points – The numerical equivalent of a grade on a 4.0 scale (A=4.0; B=3.0; C=2.0; D=1.0; E=0). Also refers to points which may be added to designated courses for weighted GPA purposes.
- X. Report Card – Document that records a student's grades, attendance, and other information.
- Y. Retention – The act of continuing a student's enrollment in a current grade level based upon unsuccessful completion of coursework.
- Z. School Year – The school year begins on the first day of school as determined by the school calendar and will continue through the day before the next approved school year. Summer courses and non-traditional courses taken during this time are part of the school year.
- AA. Student Records Systems Card (Annual Secondary School Performance Data Summary or Transcript) – Record by grade level of courses, grades, credits, and other graduation requirements completed by a student.
- AB. 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.
- AC. Weighting Grades – The process of adding quality points to advanced placement (AP), gifted & talented (GT), and honors (H) course values. Students taking a dual enrollment course in a post-secondary institution for dual credit will receive the weighting for the highest possible equivalent offered by HCPSS.

IV. Standards

- A. Grades and Codes
 1. A letter grade or a code will be given for all courses in which a student is enrolled.

2. A letter grading (A, B, C, D, E) and coding (I, N/A, N, P, W, X, Z) system as described in Sections IV.A.3. and 4. respectively, will be used; no plus or minus signs will be used for official records, such as reports cards and transcripts.
3. Grading will reflect the level of achievement of a student. Students will be given multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning via multiple measures in each quarter. Parameters for grading will be developed collaboratively with educators and the Division of Academics. Marking period grades will be determined as follows:

A (90-100%) – Outstanding level of achievement

B (80-89%) – High level of achievement

C (70-79%) – Satisfactory level of achievement

D (60-69%) – Low level of achievement

E (59% or lower) – Failure (no credit awarded for high school credit bearing courses)

Percent scores are rounded to the nearest whole number. Therefore, if the number behind the decimal point is less than 5, the score is rounded down to the next whole number and if the number behind the decimal point is 5 or more, the score is rounded up to the next whole number. (Example 1: 89.49% rounds to 89; Example 2: 89.50% rounds to 90)

4. Coding will reflect the academic history of a student. Codes are used as follows:

Codes used for courses taken in middle school and high school

I - I (Incomplete) codes will be used when a student has not been able to complete required coursework due to lawful absences or other extenuating circumstances. I codes will be converted to an appropriate letter grade according to Implementation Procedures Section III.F.1.

N/A - N/A (Not Available) codes will be used when transfer students (in-county or from out-of-county) are missing marking period and/or assessment grades. Courses with N/A codes will receive credit and will be calculated into the cumulative GPA. The final grade will be the average of the remaining quarters or assessment grades. N/A codes may also be used as a place holder for non-traditional courses until the marking period and/or assessment grades are recorded at the end of the semester.

When the achievement of Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals requires a schedule change, N/A codes will be used for missing marking period

and/or assessment grades in a new course.

P - P (Pass) codes will be used when a student successfully completes a course through credit by assessment, credit awarded for coursework from non-accredited schools, or home instruction courses upon enrollment in an HCPSS school. Courses with P codes will receive credit and will not be calculated into the cumulative GPA.

Codes used for courses taken for high school credit in middle school or high school

N - N (No credit due to absence) codes will be used when a student is denied credit in a course due to excessive absences. Any high school student with absences constituting ten percent (10%) or greater of a semester or a year-long course will be considered for denial of credit. Courses with N codes will receive no credit, will count as a credit attempted, and will earn 0 quality points in the cumulative GPA.

W - W (Withdrawal) codes will be used to indicate that a student withdrew from a course more than 14 school days from the start of the course, the date of enrollment for a non-traditional course, and did not transfer into another level of the same course. Courses with W codes will receive no credit and will not be calculated into the cumulative GPA but will be calculated into marking period GPAs.

X - X (Late enrollment in class) codes will be used when a student enrolls in a course after the twentieth day of the start of the course and too late for credit to be granted. Courses with X codes will receive no credit and will not be calculated into the cumulative GPA but will be calculated into marking period GPAs.

Z - Z (Assessment not taken) codes will be used when a student does not take a mid-term or final assessment for a course. Courses with Z codes will receive no credit, will count as a credit attempted, and will earn 0 quality points until the Z code is converted to an appropriate letter grade according to Implementation Procedures Section III.F.6.

Middle School Grades

5. Final middle school grades will be determined by translating the letter grade for each marking period and each assessment using the following quality points scale:
 - A = 4
 - B = 3
 - C = 2
 - D = 1
 - E = 0

- a. 1.0 credit courses
- i. For high school courses taught in middle school, the final assessment will be included in the second or fourth quarter grades.
 - ii. Multiply the quality points for each marking period grade by four. Compute the sum and divide by eight.
 - iii. For reporting purposes, the quotient will be converted to a letter grade using the following scale:

A = 3.50-4.00
 B = 2.50-3.49
 C = 1.50-2.49
 D = 0.75-1.49
 E = Below 0.75 (No Credit)

Note: The average for a D must be 0.75 (not .50) to 1.49 in order for credit to be awarded.

Example:

Marking Period Grade	Marking Period Grade
A=4	B=3
X4	X4
16	12

28 divided by 8 = 3.5 Final Grade A

- b. Quarter courses (0.50 credit courses)
- i. The quarter grade will be the final grade.
 - ii. For reporting purposes, the quotient will be converted to a letter grade using the following scale:
- A = 3.50-4.00
 B = 2.50-3.49
 C = 1.50-2.49
 D = 0.75-1.49
 E = Below 0.75 (no credit)

Note: The average for a D must be 0.75 (not .50) to 1.49 in order for credit to be awarded.

Example:

Marking Period Grade	Marking Period Grade
C=2	B=3
x2	x2
4	6

10 divided by 4 = 2.5 Final Grade B

- c. Quarter courses (0.25 credit courses) the quarter grade will be the final grade.

High School Grades

6. Final grades for high school will be determined by translating the letter grade for each marking period and each assessment using the following quality points scale:

A = 4

B = 3

C = 2

D = 1

E = 0

- a. 1.0 or more credit courses
- i. Multiply the quality points for each marking period grade by three. Add the quality points for the assessment grade. Compute the sum and divide by seven.
 - ii. For reporting purposes, the quotient will be converted to a letter grade using the following scale:

A = 3.50-4.00

B = 2.50-3.49

C = 1.50-2.49

D = 0.75-1.49

E = Below 0.75 (No Credit)

Note: The average for a D must be 0.75 (not .50) to 1.49 in order for credit to be awarded.

Example:

Marking Period Grade	Marking Period Grade	Final Assessment
B=3	A=4	C=2
X3	X3	x1
9	12	2

23 divided by 7 = 3.3 Final Grade B

- b. Quarter courses (0.50 credit courses)
- i. Multiply the quality points for the marking period grade by three and add the quality points for the assessment grade and divide by four.
 - ii. For reporting purposes, the quotient will be converted to a letter grade using the following scale:

A = 3.50-4.00

B = 2.50-3.49

C = 1.50-2.49

D = 0.75-1.49

E = Below 0.75 (no credit)

Note: The average for a D must be 0.75 (not .50) to 1.49 in order for credit to be awarded.

Example:

Marking Period Grade	Final Assessment
A=4	C=2
X3	x1
12	2

14 divided by 4 = 3.5 Final Grade B

7. Make-up work will be accepted under the following conditions:
- a. A student may make up work 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 school days to complete make-up work (i.e., Work due on the day of a field trip will be turned in on the next school day; work assigned on a day of a lawful absence will add one school day to the due date.). For absences beyond two weeks, an administrator can allow for additional days for work to be completed.

- b. A student may complete make-up work but will not receive a recorded grade for work missed due to an unlawful absence.
 - c. Teachers may allow students to redo work to demonstrate a satisfactory level of mastery at a minimum.
 - d. Make-up work may not necessarily be identical to the original assignment but will meet instructional intent.
- 8. Student behaviors, including but not limited to, lateness to class, absence (however, per Section IV.A.4., excessive absences may result in loss of credit), or disciplinary action, may not be used to reduce a student's grade. However, student behaviors and attendance may impact the student's grade indirectly because of missed instructional time and incomplete assignments.
 - 9. Extra credit is not offered in Grades 6-12. However, students may be provided opportunities to recover credit and demonstrate mastery through other relevant coursework. Opportunities should be given to students who are not passing whenever possible.
 - 10. HCPSS will recognize and accept any and all credits a student earned toward graduation in any other public school in Maryland. Credits earned while not enrolled in a Maryland public school would be reviewed in accordance with COMAR and HCPSS policy and procedures.
 - 11. High school courses offered in middle school will appear on high school transcripts.

B. High School Grade Point Average

- 1. Grade Point Averages (GPAs) will be calculated and reported at regular intervals on both a periodic and cumulative basis. The following guidelines will be used in calculating GPAs:
 - a. The GPA for a marking period will be determined by adding each course's total quality points and dividing the sum by the number of class periods.
 - b. The cumulative GPA will be determined by multiplying the quality points for the final grade earned for each course by the credits assigned to the course, summing the results, and dividing by the total of the credits assigned to the courses taken.
 - c. For students earning a Certificate of Program Completion, the GPA will be determined by all courses the student is enrolled in, since this student is not earning high school credits.

2. Both cumulative unweighted and weighted GPAs will be calculated for all students at the end of each marking period.
3. Weighted GPAs will be based on course level, with additional quality points added to designated courses.
4. For students graduating in 2020 or prior, early senior year calculations, based on credits earned in grades 9–11, include the following, which are reported on the high school transcript:
 - a. The cumulative unweighted GPA.
 - b. The cumulative weighted GPA.
 - c. The unweighted class rank.
 - d. The weighted class rank.
5. For students graduating in 2021 or later, a cumulative unweighted and weighted GPA will be calculated.
6. Students must earn a grade of A, B, or C in a GT or AP course in order to earn the weighted designation of 1.0 additional quality point per credit. Students must earn a grade of A, B, or C in an Honors course in order to earn the weighted designation of .5 additional quality point per credit. Students taking a dual enrollment course in a post-secondary institution for dual credit will receive the weighting for the highest possible equivalent offered by HCPSS, using the chart below. The following chart summarizes quality points for weighted class rank/GPA purposes, where applicable:

	AP and G/T	Honors	Regular
A	5.0	4.5	4.0
B	4.0	3.5	3.0
C	3.0	2.5	2.0
D	1.0	1.0	1.0
E	0	0	0

C. Reporting

1. Prompt feedback is essential for developing student understanding. The grading and returning of student work will occur within three weeks of the student's submission, in the learning management system and also in class, if appropriate and barring unusual circumstances. Some non-traditional courses (such as online and dual enrollment courses) may not meet these expectations. Please check the syllabus or speak with the instructor.

2. Teachers will notify parents of progress throughout the marking period. Parents may access a student's progress through the learning management system. Additionally, teachers may communicate progress with parents in person, by phone, or in writing, either electronically or in print.
3. School employees will communicate to students and parents on a quarterly basis the student's level of academic performance in the curriculum.
4. Report cards will be issued at the conclusion of each marking period and will reflect all work completed during that marking period unless otherwise indicated by the teacher.

D. Report Card Grade and/or Code Change

1. A change of a report card grade will be made for a sound educational purpose according to the following protocol:
 - a. A teacher will not change a student's report card grade unless there are extenuating circumstances and the change is approved by the principal. The teacher will follow the procedures established by the HCPSS below in Section IV.D.2.
 - b. A principal may change a student's report card grade only after conferring with the teacher who assigned the grade. The principal will notify the teacher in writing if the grade is to be changed. The principal is responsible for implementing the procedures defined by the HCPSS below in Section IV.D.2. for processing and recording a grade change and subsequent change to permanent records.
 - c. Grade and/or code changes cannot exceed 45 school days following the last day of school in the marking period in which the change is to be made.
 - d. For a grade change for the 4th marking period, final assessments or for a non-traditional course, the timeline would begin on the first day of school in the new school year.
2. Procedures
 - a. Grade and/or code changes must be documented on the grade change form. Parents must be notified of the grade change by the teacher or the principal.
 - i. The grade change form needs a signature from the teacher, the data clerk, and the principal. It needs to include a reason for the grade change and date of the approval.

- ii. Copies of the grade change form go into the student's cumulative record, to the teacher, to the data clerk, and to the Office of School Counseling.
 - iii. A grade change may be authorized by the Executive Director of Program Innovation and Student Well-Being, Chief Academic Officer, Chief School Management and Instructional Leadership Officer, or Community Superintendent. If a grade change is generated from outside the school, a grade change form is still completed with a reason for the change. This form goes into the student's cumulative record and to the principal and data clerk.
 - b. Parents will be notified of the grade change by the teacher, principal, or Central Office employee changing the grade.
 - c. The Office of School Counseling will audit the grade changes annually.
 - d. Appeals of grade changes can be made to the Community Superintendent.
- E. Homework
- 1. If assigned, homework will be purposeful, appropriate, informational, and flexible. It is intended to extend learning and provide an opportunity for practice. Some courses or instructors may choose to not assign homework.
 - 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 on homework will be provided as outlined in students' IEPs and Section 504 Plans.
 - c. Informational: Homework allows 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 guidelines will be established using the following criteria:
 - a. Each school year, schools will communicate the school's homework procedures with all stakeholders.
 - b. Teachers are required to ensure that homework is accommodated/modified as necessary in accordance with students' IEPs and Section 504 Plans.

- c. Teachers will provide feedback on homework assignments.
- d. Students must be given a non-electronic option for homework completion and submission. Assignments cannot be due beyond regular school hours or be required to be submitted electronically. While electronic submission can be utilized it cannot be required.
- e. Homework assignments may not be assigned or due on a day schools are closed due to inclement weather or unplanned closures.
- f. Homework may not be assigned over the summer for any courses, nor winter or spring breaks for middle or high school courses.
- g. 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 school days to complete make-up work.
- h. Homework may be graded in grades 6-12 but cannot exceed 10% of the total grade.

3. Amount and Purpose of Homework

- a. For the purposes of determining number of hours of homework per week or day, teachers should include reading of course material, studying of course material, and practicing skills taught in course (e.g., rehearsing a musical instrument). Time spent on long-term projects should also be included when determining number of hours of homework; however, these projects do not constitute homework for grading purposes under Section IV.E.2.h.
- b. Purpose of Homework: Homework reflects daily instruction, reinforces previously taught skills, prepares students for future lessons, and/or promotes creativity.
- c. Middle School Courses (Courses with no Credits)
 - i. Amount: Each instructor may assign an average of, at most, one hour of homework per week. Not all classes will require homework. Some classes might require students to spend more or less time on homework than is typical.
 - ii. Teaching staff will be provided with opportunities to meet as teams to schedule assignments so that students do not regularly have more than one hour of homework each week per instructor. It is recommended that the school principal or designee work with teaching staff to facilitate this collaboration.

- d. Courses that include High School Credits
 - i. Amount: Each instructor may assign an average of, at most, one and a half hours of homework per week. Not all classes will require homework. Some classes might require students to spend more or less time on homework than is typical.
 - ii. The goals and expectations for homework will be clear and include opportunities for student input. As appropriate, flexibility and student choice will be considered in the assignment of homework duration, rigor, product, and weight in grading. A syllabus is recommended for distribution at the beginning of every semester outlining each course's requirements, including regular assignments, projects, possible due dates, and procedures for requesting feedback on assignments.

V. Responsibilities

Principals will communicate information annually regarding high school grading and reporting to all students, parents, and HCPSS employees.

VI. Delegation of Authority

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

VII. References

- A. Legal
 - The Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §7-301, Compulsory Attendance
 - The Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §7-101(c) (Informal Kinship Care)
 - The Annotated Code of Maryland, Family Law Article, §5-507
 - COMAR 13A.03.02, Graduation Requirements for Public High School in Maryland
 - COMAR 13A.03.02.08 Grading and Reporting
 - COMAR 13A.08.01.03, Lawful Absence
 - COMAR 13A.08.01.04, Unlawful Absence
 - COMAR 13A.10.01.01, Home Instruction Program
- B. Other Board Policies
 - Policy 8200 Digital Education
 - Policy 8030 Graduation Requirements
 - Policy 9010 Attendance
 - Policy 9070 Academic Eligibility for High School Extracurricular Activities
- C. Relevant Data Sources
- D. Other

NCAA Eligibility Center - Definition of Non-traditional courses -
<http://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/future/nontraditional-courses>
Catalog of Approved High School Courses
Grade Change Form
Schedule Change Form

VIII. History

ADOPTED: June 25, 1987
REVIEWED:
MODIFIED: April 14, 2016
REVISED: February 8, 1990
June 10, 1999
January 27, 2005
June 12, 2008
March 21, 2013
June 13, 2019
EFFECTIVE: July 1, 2019