

**I. Policy Statement**

The Board of Education of Howard County is committed to ensuring that all students meet or exceed rigorous performance and achievement standards and recognizes the need for the regular assessment of each student's academic progress. Grading, promotion, and retention within the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) are based on the degree of success the individual student has achieved in completing the educational program.

**II. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines to ensure that grading, promotion, and retention is determined in a consistent manner and information is regularly reported to students and their parents.

**III. Definitions**

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

- A. Class Rank – The relative position of a student in his/her graduation class based upon a cumulative grade point average.
- B. Code – A letter used to reflect the academic history of a student.
- C. Course – A planned sequence of instruction related to a specific subject. The content of an HCPSS course is defined by an approved essential curriculum.
- D. Course Level – An indication of the rigor of a given course. Course levels may include advanced placement (AP), gifted & talented (GT), honors (H), regular, and review. Not all courses are offered at different levels.
- E. 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.
- F. Credit By Exam – Credit awarded to a student who does not complete a course but successfully demonstrates knowledge of established learning goals by passing an examination.

- G. Essential Curriculum – The core goals and objectives that define what students are expected to know and be able to do.
- H. Grade – A letter with a quality point equivalent indicating a measure of performance and related to achievement of course objectives.
- I. 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 three types of GPAs:
  - 1. Marking Period GPA
  - 2. End-of-Year GPA
  - 3. Cumulative GPA
- J. Interim Report – A report issued prior to the report card that reflects the progress of a student through the date of issuance.
- K. Lawful Absence – An absence recorded as excused in accordance with Policy 9010 Attendance.
- L. Marking Period – A segment of the school year during which instruction is delivered, student progress is monitored, and grades are given.
- M. Official Records – A student's report card and Student Records Systems card.
- 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).

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.
- O. 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 class rank/GPA purposes.
- P. Report Card – Document that records a student’s grades, attendance, and other information.
- Q. 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.
- R. Unlawful Absence – An absence recorded as unexcused in accordance with Policy 9010 Attendance.
- S. Weighting Grades – The process of adding quality points to honors (H), gifted and talented (GT), and advanced placement (AP) course values.

#### **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 will be used; no plus or minus signs will be used for official records.
  3. Grading will reflect the level of achievement of a student. 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)

Percent scores are rounded to the nearest whole number. Therefore, any score below .5 rounds down and any score ending in .5 and above rounds up. (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:
- 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 Procedure II.C.6.a.
  - 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 five percent (5%) or greater of a semester or a yearlong 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 end-of-year GPA and cumulative GPA.
  - N/A - N/A (Not Available) codes will be used when transfer students are missing marking period and/or exam grades. 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 exam grades in a new course. Courses with N/A codes will receive credit and will be calculated into the end-of-year GPA and cumulative GPA.
  - P - P (Pass) codes will be used when a student successfully completes a course through credit by exam, 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 end-of-year GPA and cumulative GPA.
  - W - W (Withdrawal) codes will be used to indicate that a student withdrew from a course more than seven school days after the published interim report of the first quarter of the 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 end-of-year GPA and cumulative GPA.
  - X - X (Late enrollment in class) codes will be used when a student enrolls in a course too late for credit to be granted. Courses with X codes will receive no credit and will not be calculated into the end-of-year GPA and cumulative GPA.
  - Z - Z (Exam not taken) codes will be used when a student does not take a mid-term or final exam 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 Procedure II.C.6.e.
5. Academic eligibility will be calculated based on all courses in which a student is enrolled, in accordance with Policy 9070 Academic Eligibility for High School Extracurricular Activities.

6. Quality points will be used to compute numerical averages from letter grades.
7. A student may make up work and receive a recorded grade when a lawful absence is documented by a note from the parent in accordance with Policy 9010 Attendance.
  - a. A student may make up work but will not receive a recorded grade for an unlawful absence.
  - b. Students returning from a lawful absence will be allowed the same number of days of the absence to complete make-up work.
8. Student grades will not be subject to a percentage grade reduction for lateness to class, absence, behavior, or disciplinary action. (Such actions could impact the quarter grade in an indirect manner because of missed work and incomplete assignments.)

**B. Grade Point Average and Class Rank**

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 credit-bearing course's total quality points and dividing the sum by the number of credit-bearing class periods.
  - b. The end-of-year and cumulative GPAs 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.
2. Both cumulative non-weighted and weighted GPAs will be calculated for all students at the end of each marking period and at the end of each school year.
3. Weighted GPAs will be based on course level, with additional quality points added to designated courses.
4. 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 non-weighted GPA.
  - b. The cumulative weighted GPA.
  - c. The non-weighted class rank.

- d. The weighted class rank.
5. End-of-the-senior-year calculations, based on credits earned in grades 9–12, include the following, which are reported on the high school transcript:
  - a. The cumulative non-weighted GPA.
  - b. The cumulative weighted GPA.
  - c. The non-weighted class rank.
  - d. The weighted class rank.

**C. Reporting**

1. School staff will communicate to students and parents on a quarterly basis the student's level of academic performance in the essential curriculum.
  2. The interim report will reflect the progress of the student through the date of the report's issuance and will not represent the marking period or final grade.
  3. Teachers will notify parents of unsatisfactory progress throughout the marking period.
  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.** Teachers will grade, post, and return student work within three weeks of the due date, barring unusual circumstances.

**V. Responsibilities**

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

**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.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 8030 Graduation Requirements
  - Policy 9010 Attendance
  - Policy 9070 Academic Eligibility for High School Extracurricular Activities
- C. Relevant Data Sources
  - (none)
- D. Other
  - Catalog of Approved High School Courses
  - Grade Change Form
  - Schedule Change Form

**VIII. History**

ADOPTED: June 25, 1987  
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**GRADING AND REPORTING:**  
**HIGH SCHOOL**

Effective: September 11, 2014

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**I. Notification/Dissemination**

The principal will inform all students, parents, and staff of the provisions of this policy annually and at other times as appropriate. This may be done in the following ways:

- A. Making announcements via the public address system at the beginning of the school year.
- B. Publishing the information in school newsletters.
- C. Publishing the information in staff/student handbooks.
- D. Posting the information on a bulletin board and/or school's website.
- E. Making the information available for new students through the registration process.

**II. Grading**

- A. Determining Student Grades
  - 1. The letter grade will be used to indicate the individual level of achievement of each student in relation to attainment of course objectives.
  - 2. The following factors will be used as guidelines in determining level of achievement:
    - a. Competence – The degree of accomplishment as determined by tests, examinations, Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) assessments, teacher evaluation, and demonstration of performance objectives.
    - b. Assignments and preparation – The degree of accomplishment as determined by quality of work, completeness of assignments, regularity with which assignments are completed, and punctuality in submitting assignments.



- c. Participation – The degree of interaction in the class, as reflected in the day-to-day performance of the student in relation to the instructional methods used in the classroom.
  - d. Daily work habits in the classroom – The degree of student accuracy, independence and dependability, use of time, attentiveness, and promptness in submitting work.
3. Extra credit, an academic opportunity for a student to raise an individual assignment grade, will be offered solely at the discretion of the teacher and will extend learning in the course.
  4. During the 2014–2015 school year, each curriculum content area will review grading practices.
  5. Prior to distribution to students, the principal/designee will review and approve the teacher's grading explanations described in II.A. 6.
  6. Within the first five days of class, every teacher will distribute to his/her students an explanation of how students' grades will be calculated. This information will be made available to parents.

B. Examinations

1. Full-year courses
  - a. At the end of the second and fourth marking period, an examination will be given.
  - b. Each examination will assess learning for that semester.
  - c. The quality points for each examination grade will constitute 1/10 of the final grade for the course.
  - d. No student is exempt from these examinations, and examinations may not be taken before a scheduled examination date.
2. Semester courses
  - a. At the end of the semester, an examination will be given.
  - b. The examination will assess learning for that semester.
  - c. The quality points for the examination grade will constitute 1/5 of the final grade for the course.

d. No student is exempt from this examination, and examinations may not be taken before a scheduled examination date.

3. A student on suspension or expulsion at examination time will be permitted to take the examination and will remain eligible to qualify for the awarding of course credit.

C. Determining Final Grades and Credit

1. Only the final grade and/or code will be retained on the Student Records Systems card.

2. Final grades will be determined by translating the letter grade for each marking period and each examination using the following quality points scale:

A = 4

B = 3

C = 2

D = 1

E = 0

a. Full-year courses

i. Multiply the quality points for each marking period grade by two. Add the quality points for each examination grade. Compute the sum and divide by ten.

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	Mid-Term Exam	Marking Period Grade	Marking Period Grade	Final Exam
A=4	B=3	B=3	B=3	A=4	C=2
x2	x2	x1	x2	x2	x1
8	6	3	6	8	2

33 divided by 10 = 3.3 Final Grade B

- b. Semester courses (half-credit courses)
- i. Multiply the quality points for each marking period grade by two and compute their sum. Add the quality points for the examination grade and divide by five.
  - 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	Mid-Term Exam
C=2	B=3	C=2
x2	x2	x1
4	6	2

12 divided by 5 = 2.4 Final Grade C

3. For a full-year course to earn credit, a student must earn at least a 0.75 year-end average and either (a) pass one marking period each semester or (b) pass both marking periods in the second semester.  
 For a semester course to earn credit, a student must pass at least one marking period with at least a 0.75 end-of-course average.
4. If a student retakes a course during the school year or in summer school where credit was previously earned:

- a. The student may earn credit more than once for the same course only if the course is designated as such in the Catalog of Approved High School Courses.
- b. If the course is not designated as eligible for additional credit in the Catalog of Approved High School Courses, the student may still retake the course. Both the final grades from taking the course originally and for retaking the course will be included in the cumulative GPA. Both courses will be recorded on the transcript.

5. Summer courses

- a. Original credit – Original credit course grades earned in summer school will be reflected in the high school transcript and calculated in the cumulative GPA.
- b. Review credit – Review credit course grades earned in summer school will be calculated in the cumulative GPA. Both the original course grade and the summer school grade will be included in the GPA and recorded on the high school transcript.

6. Implementation of Codes

a. I (Incomplete) Code

- i. Incomplete codes will be issued only for marking period grades and only upon approval of the principal/designee when a student has been unable to complete required course work due to legal absences or other extenuating circumstances.
- ii. Incomplete codes must be converted to a letter grade no later than two weeks after the issuance of the report card, except in unusual circumstances as approved by the principal/designee. At the end of the two weeks, the teacher will change the incomplete code to the appropriate grade and notify the student and parent.
- iii. A student with an I code will not be academically eligible for extracurricular activities.

b. N (No credit due to absences) Code

N codes may be issued when a student has earned a final passing grade but is denied credit from a course due to excessive absences. A student with absences of 5% or greater will be considered for denial of credit. A teacher, when recommending denial of credit, and the principal, when

making the final determination regarding denial of credit, will consider the following:

- i. Excused or unexcused absences.
- ii. Diligence, timeliness, and quality of make-up work.
- iii. Extent of prior notice to student and parent regarding possibility of denial of credit.
- iv. Improvement of student attendance following notice regarding possibility of denial of credit.

For GPA purposes, N codes are calculated as credits attempted and 0 quality points earned.

c. W (Withdrawal) Code

W codes indicate that a student withdrew from a course after the designated date for withdrawal (seven school days after the first interim report for the course).

- i. If a student transfers between levels of the same course, a W code will not be assigned. The grade the student earned in the original course will be transferred and averaged into the new course. The teacher may require make-up work.
- ii. If a student transfers to a different course prior to the designated date for withdrawal, a W code will not be assigned. The student will be responsible for making up work in the new course. Make-up work will be averaged into the first marking period grade.
- iii. If a student withdraws from a course and transfers to a different course after the designated date for withdrawal, a code of W will be assigned in the withdrawn class and no credit will be awarded. The schedule change form will be placed in the student's cumulative record.
- iv. If an IEP team determines a student needs a change in schedule to make progress toward meeting his/her IEP goals or, a code of W will be assigned in the withdrawn class. The student may earn credit in the new course, and the final grade will be calculated based on the grades earned in the new course. The schedule change form will be placed in the student's cumulative record.

d. X (Late enrollment) Code

X codes will be issued when a student enrolls in a course too late for credit to be granted.

- i. When a student withdraws from a course after the designated date for withdrawal and transfers to a different course (rather than another level of the same course), an X code will be assigned in the new course for marking periods prior to and including the marking period in which the transfer occurred. An X code will also be assigned for the final grade on the report card and the transcript.
- ii. When a student transfers into the HCPSS more than seven days after the interim report of the first marking period and before the second marking period interims are issued, and enrolls in a course in which he/she was not enrolled in the previous school, X is assigned for all marking periods prior to and including the marking period in which the student transfers. An exception may be made as outlined in II.D.2 below.

e. Z (Exam not taken) Code

Z codes will be assigned when a student does not take a mid-term or final exam for a course.

Z codes will be converted to the letter grade earned on the exam if the exam is taken within the following deadlines:

- i. For a mid-term exam, the student will take the exam no later than four weeks following the administration of the exam.
- ii. For a final exam, the student will take the exam no later than September 15 of the next school year.

Under unusual circumstances, the principal may approve an extension to the deadlines in II.C.6.e.i and II.C.6.e.ii above.

Otherwise, the Z code is converted to an E for the exam grade, and a final grade will be calculated.

D. Students Transferring into the HCPSS or into Alternative Programs

1. When a student transfers into the HCPSS from a system that does not use mid-term exams, the code N/A will be entered and the final course grade will be calculated based on the remaining marking period grades and final exam.

2. If a student transfers into the HCPSS (more than seven days after the interim report of the first marking period and before the second marking period interims are issued) and enrolls in a course in which he/she was not enrolled in the previous school, the principal or his/her designee may take extenuating circumstances into consideration when determining whether a code of X or N/A should be used.
3. The grades for comparable courses for students who have transferred from another school will be averaged into the final grade.
4. Religion courses from parochial schools not satisfying II.D.3 above will be reflected on the transcript but will not be awarded credit.
5. Credit transfers for students assigned to alternative programs will be reviewed by the Central Admissions Committee (CAC)/Central Education Placement Team (CEPT) and approved by the principal.

E. Promotions

1. To be promoted to grade 10, students must have five credits including one English credit and one year of high school attendance.
2. To be promoted to grade 11, students must have ten credits including two English credits and two years of high school attendance.
3. To be promoted to grade 12, students must have fourteen credits including two English credits and three years of high school attendance.

F. GPA and Class Rank

1. Class rank is the relative position of a student in his/her senior class based upon a cumulative grade point average. Class rank may be either non-weighted or weighted, depending on whether the GPA is non-weighted or weighted. (When a weighted GPA is calculated, quality points are added to designated courses.)
2. Courses carrying a designation of gifted and talented (GT), advanced placement (AP), and honors (H) will contribute to weighted class rank. Weighted courses will be indicated in the Catalog of Approved High School Courses. For transfer students, HCPSS will weight grades of courses designated GT, AP, and H taken outside HCPSS if the same courses are offered in the Catalog of Approved High School Courses.
3. 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 H course in order to earn the

weighted designation of .5 additional quality point per credit. The following chart summarizes quality points for weighted class rank/GPA purposes:

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

4. Both a non-weighted and weighted GPA are computed for each marking period, for each year, and cumulatively at the end of each year using the chart in II.F.3. Both a non-weighted and weighted cumulative GPA will be on final report cards at the end of each school year.
5. Both a non-weighted and weighted cumulative GPA will be calculated by October 1 of the senior year and will be based on credits earned in grades nine through eleven.
6. At graduation, a non-weighted and weighted cumulative GPA will be calculated based on credits earned in grades nine through twelve. Non-weighted and weighted class ranks will be determined by these GPAs. Both GPAs and resulting class ranks will serve as the final GPAs and the final class ranks.
7. GPAs and class ranks from both October 1 and the end of the senior year will appear on the final high school transcript.
8. Weighted GPA will be used for academic eligibility for extracurricular activities, National Honor Society, honor roll, and for any other activity requiring the reporting of a grade point average.

### **III. Reporting**

#### **A. Interim Report**

1. At the midpoint of each marking period, all teachers will provide written notice to the parent concerning student progress.
2. Teachers should also notify parents of unsatisfactory progress throughout the marking period.

#### **B. Final report cards for high school students will be mailed to parents at the end of each school year.**



#### **IV. Report Card Grade Change**

- A. A change of a report card grade will be made for a sound educational purpose according to the following protocol:
1. 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 IV.B.
  2. 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 IV.B for processing and recording a grade change and subsequent change to permanent records.

B. Procedures

Grade changes must be documented on the grade change form. Parents must be notified of the grade change by the teacher or the principal. The grade change form needs a signature from the teacher, the data clerk, and the principal. Copies of the grade change form go into the student's cumulative record, to the teacher, and to the data clerk.

#### **V. Report Card Code Change**

A change of a report card code will be made according to the following procedures:

- I (Incomplete) This code will be changed by following the guidelines described in Section II.C.6.a.ii of these procedures.
- N (No credit due to absence) This code will not be changed unless it was assigned in error, in which case the principal is the only person authorized to change it.
- P (Pass) This code will not be changed unless it was assigned in error, in which case the principal is the only person authorized to change it.
- W (Withdrawal) This code will not be changed unless it was assigned in error, in which case the principal is the only person authorized to change it.
- X (Late enrollment in class) This code will not be changed unless it was assigned in error, in which case the principal is the only person authorized to change it.

Z (Exam not taken) This code will be changed by following the guidelines described in Section II.C.6.e. of these procedures.

**VI. History**

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