

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 information on grading, promotion, and retention is determined in a consistent manner and regularly reported to students and their parents.

III. Definitions

- 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 relative rigor of a given course. Course levels may include Advanced Placement (AP), gifted & talented, honors, 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 learning goals.
- F. Credit By Exam – Credit awarded to student who does not complete a course but successfully demonstrates knowledge of established learning goals by passing an examination.
- G. Essential Curriculum – Educational goals, content, and skills that are important for all students to learn.

- 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 (G.P.A.) – Numerical representation of a grade measuring a student's overall performance across courses taken for a specific period of time.
- J. Interim/Progress Report – A report reflecting the progress of the student through the date of issuance.
- K. Lawful Absence – An absence recorded as lawful in accordance with Policy 9010.
- 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 privileges.
 - 4. Guardian – A person who has been placed by the court in charge of the affairs of the student and granted parental rights and privileges.
 - 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.
 - 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 section 5-507 of the Family Law Article.
- O. Quality Points – The numerical equivalent of a grade on the standard 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/G.P.A. purposes.
- P. Report Card – Document that records the student's grades, attendance, and other information.
- Q. Student Records Systems Card (Permanent Record Card or Transcript) – Record by grade level of courses, tests, competency requirements, and credits earned by a student.

- R. Unlawful Absence – An absence recorded as unlawful in accordance with Policy 9010.

IV. Standards

A. Grades and Codes

The grading system for high school consists of letter grades.

1. Letter grades will be given in all courses taken for credit except where other means of evaluation have been authorized by the superintendent and adopted by the principal and staff.
2. A letter grading (A, B, C, D, E) and coding (I, N, P, W, X, Z) system will be used; no plus or minus signs will be used for official records.

Grading: The purpose of grades is to 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. 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.

Coding: The purpose of codes is to reflect the academic history of a student.

- I (Incomplete) I codes must be converted to an appropriate letter grade according to established procedures.
- N (No credit due to absence) See Policy 9010, Attendance. For G.P.A. purposes, N codes are calculated as credits attempted and 0 quality points earned.
- P (Pass) Given upon successful completion of credit by exam, for credit awarded for coursework from non-accredited schools and/or home instruction upon enrollment in a Howard County Public School, or for credit for high school courses taken in middle school; codes of P may also be transferred from accredited non-HCPSS schools or assigned to credits earned from such schools under certain circumstances.)
- W (Withdrawal) No credit awarded. Not calculated in G.P.A. (Excludes transfers between levels of the same course.)

- X (Late enrollment in class) No credit awarded. Not calculated in G.P.A.
- Z (Exam not taken) Z codes may be converted to an appropriate letter grade according to established procedures. For G.P.A. purposes, Z codes which are not converted are calculated as credits attempted and 0 quality points earned.

3. In computing numerical averages from letter grades, quality points will be used.
4. Make-Up Work
 - a. A student may make up work and receive a recorded grade when a lawful absence(s) is documented by a note from the parent.
 - b. A student may make up work but will not receive a recorded grade for an unlawful absence.
 - c. Students returning from a lawful absence will have an equal number of days to complete make up work.
5. Student grades may not be subject to a percentage grade reduction for lateness to class, absence, behavior or disciplinary action. Such actions could impact on the final grade, however, in an indirect manner because of missed work and incomplete assignments.

B. Grade Point Average and Class Rank

1. Grade Point Averages (G.P.A.s) will be calculated and reported at regular intervals on both a periodic and cumulative basis. The following guidelines will be used in calculating G.P.A.s:
 - a. Credits earned with a code of P are not used for G.P.A. purposes.
 - b. The G.P.A. for a marking period will be determined by multiplying the quality points for each course by the number of class periods for the course, summing the results, and dividing the sum by the number of credit-bearing class periods for the quarter.
 - c. Annual and cumulative G.P.A. scores 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 the sum by the sum of the credits assigned to the courses taken.
2. Both cumulative non-weighted and weighted G.P.A.s and corresponding class ranks will be calculated for all students during their senior year.
3. Weighted G.P.A.s will be based on course level, with quality points added to designated courses.

4. The non-weighted class rank based on credits earned in grades 9-11 is the “official” class rank.
5. A weighted class rank may only be used for the purpose of college admission and/or scholarship applications.

C. Reporting

1. School staff shall communicate to students and parents on a quarterly basis the student's level of academic performance in the essential curriculum.
2. The interim/progress report reflects the progress of the student through the date of issuance and does not represent the marking period or final grade. Teachers should also notify parents of unsatisfactory progress throughout the marking period.
3. Report cards are issued at the conclusion of each marking period and shall reflect all work completed during that marking period unless otherwise indicated by the teacher. The grading and return of student work will generally occur within three weeks.

V. Compliance

- A. Principals will communicate annually information regarding high school grading and reporting to all students, parents, and staff.
- B. School staff will communicate to students and parents on a regular basis the student's level of academic performance in the essential curriculum. Appropriate academic interventions will be provided by school staff if a student is performing below grade level.

VI. Delegation of Authority

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

VII. References

- A. Legal
The Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, Section 7-301, Compulsory Attendance
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

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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 is used to indicate the achievement of each student in relation to attainment of course objectives.
 - 2. The following factors should 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's Assessments, teacher evaluation, and demonstration of performance objectives.
 - b. Assignments and preparation – The degree of accomplishment as determined by quality of work done, 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 – Determined by student accuracy, independence and dependability, use of time, attentiveness, and promptness in submitting work.

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 average quality point value of the two examinations will constitute 1/5 of the final grade for the course. The average is not rounded.
 - d. No student is exempt from these examinations.
 - e. These examinations must be taken in order to qualify for the awarding of course credit.
- 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 point equivalent of the examination grade will constitute 1/5 of the final grade for the course.
 - d. No student is exempt from this examination.
 - e. This examination must be taken in order to qualify for the awarding of course credit.
- 3. A student on suspension at examination time will be permitted to take the examination and will remain eligible to qualify for the awarding of course credit.
- 4. A student on expulsion at examination time will not be permitted to take the examination and will not be 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 computed in the following manner for all high schools:
 - a. Full year courses
 - i. Compute the sum of the quality point equivalents for the four marking periods.

- ii. Add the averaged quality point value of the examination grades to the sum above, and divide by five.
 - b. Semester courses (half credit courses)
 - i. Multiply the quality point equivalent of each marking period grade by two and compute their sum.
 - ii. Add the quality point value of the examination grade and divide by five.
 - c. Summer courses
 - i. Original credit – Original credit course grades earned in summer school will be reflected in the high school transcript and calculated in the G.P.A.
 - ii. Review credit – Review credit course grades earned in summer school will be averaged with the final grade earned in the same course to compute G.P.A. Both courses will be included on the high school transcript. A maximum of one (1) credit per course will be awarded.
 - d. Final grades are determined by translating the quality point equivalents derived from year long and semester courses to the traditional quality point scale in the following manner:
 - 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)The lone exception to this formula is for the grade of D.
Note: The average for a D must be 0.75 (not .50) to 1.49 in order for credit to be awarded.
3. A student must pass two marking periods with at least a 0.75 year-end average by passing either one marking period each semester or both marking periods in the second semester in order to receive credit.
4. Withdrawal (W) Code – Any student who withdraws from any course more than seven school days after the published interim report of the first quarter of the course will receive a W (withdrawal) on the report card and permanent record card. No credit shall be received by students who withdraw.
 - a. If a student transfers between levels of the same course, the grade the student earned will be transferred and averaged. A W code will not be assigned.

- b. If a student withdraws from a course and transfers to a different course more than seven school days after the published interim report of the first quarter of the course, no credit will be awarded. The schedule change form will be placed in the student's cumulative record. A code of W will be assigned.
 - c. Credit transfers for students assigned to alternative programs will be determined by the principal.
5. Course Transfers
- a. If a student transfers between levels of the same course no W code will be entered on the report card or permanent record.
 - b. If a student transfers to a different course before one week after the published first interim report the student will be responsible for making up work in the new course. Make up work will be averaged into the first quarter grade. No W code will be assigned.
6. The grades for students who have transferred in from another school will be averaged into the final grade. The principal will determine grade and credit transfer status for students entering during the school year from a non Howard County Public School.
7. Incomplete Codes
- a. Incomplete codes will only be issued upon approval of the principal or his/her designee when a student has not been able to complete required course work due to legal absences or other extenuating circumstances.
 - b. Incomplete codes must be converted to the appropriate letter grade no later than the end of the succeeding marking period, except in the unusual circumstances as approved by the principal or his/her designee.
 - c. For academic eligibility for high school extracurricular activities, incomplete codes must be converted to a letter grade to determine eligibility.
8. Z Codes
- Z codes will be issued when a student does not take a mid-term or final exam for a course.

Exams must be taken and Z codes must be converted to the appropriate letter grade no later than four weeks following the administration of the exam, except under unusual circumstances as approved by the principal or his/her designee. Otherwise, the Z code is reflected on the report card and the permanent record card (SR3). For G.P.A. purposes, Z codes which are not converted are calculated as credits attempted and 0 quality points earned.

9. N Codes

Students with absences of 5% or greater may be denied credit. (Reference Policy 9010 - Attendance) For G.P.A. purposes, N codes are calculated as credits attempted and 0 quality points earned.

10. X Codes

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

When a student withdraws from a course more than seven school days after the interim report of the first quarter of the course and transfers to a different course (rather than another level of the same course), the student will receive an X code in the new course for all quarters up to and including the quarter in which the transfer occurred, as well as an X code for the final grade on the report card and the transcript. The code of X is similarly used when a student transfers into the HCPSS and enrolls in a course more than seven school days after the interim report of the first quarter of the course, and the new course is not a level of a course in which they were enrolled in their previous school.

D. Promotions

1. To be promoted to grade 10 students must have five credits including one English
2. To be promoted to grade 11 students must have ten credits including two English
3. To be promoted to grade 12 students must have fourteen credits including two English

E. G.P.A. and Class Rank

1. Class rank is the relative position of a student in his/her graduation class based upon a cumulative grade point average. Class rank may be either non-weighted or weighted, depending on whether the G.P.A. is non-weighted or weighted (when a weighted G.P.A. 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 determine weighted class rank. Weighted courses will be indicated in the Catalog of Approved High School Courses. HCPSS will weight grades of courses designated G/T, AP, and Honors taken outside HCPSS when these 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 gifted and talented or advanced placement 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**. The following chart summarizes quality points for weighted class rank/G.P.A. purposes:

	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

4. A non-weighted G.P.A. is computed electronically for each marking period, for each year, and cumulatively at the end of each year.
5. Both a non-weighted and weighted cumulative G.P.A. and corresponding class ranks are calculated by October 1 of the senior year based on credits earned in grades nine through eleven (the “official” class rank), and also upon graduation based on credits earned in grades nine through twelve (the “final” class rank). Both the weighted and non-weighted class rank/G.P.A. for the two periods will appear on the final high school transcript.
6. Weighted class rank/G.P.A. may only be used for the purpose of college admission and/or scholarship applications. It will not be used for eligibility, national honor society, honor roll, or for any other activity requiring the reporting of a grade point average.

III. Reporting

A. Interim/Progress Report

1. At the midpoint of each marking period all teachers shall notify the parent in writing concerning student progress.
2. Teachers should also notify parents of unsatisfactory progress throughout the marking period.

B. Final report cards for high schools will be mailed to parents at the end of the school year.

IV. Grade Change

- A. A grade change will only be made for sound educational purposes.
1. A teacher may change a student's report card grade by following the procedures established by the Howard County Public School System.
 2. A principal may only change a student's report card grade for a clear educational purpose after conferring with the teacher who assigned the grade. The principal must notify the teacher in writing if the grade is to be changed. The principal is responsible for implementing the procedures defined by the HCPSS 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. The grade change form includes the following: Student name, student grade and ID number, course name, course number, reason for the grade change, and if the grade change was initiated by the teacher or by the principal. 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, Records Secretary, and the Administrative Director.

V. Code Change

- I (Incomplete) This code can be changed per the parameters described in Section II.C.7 of these procedures.
- N (No credit due to absence) There is no provision for change. The principal is the only person authorized to change codes assigned in error.
- P (Pass) There is no provision for change. The principal is the only person authorized to change codes assigned in error.
- W (Withdrawal) There is no provision for change. The principal is the only person authorized to change codes assigned in error.
- X (Late enrollment in class) There is no provision for change. The principal is the only person authorized to change codes assigned in error.
- Z (Exam not taken) This code can be changed per the parameters described in Section II.C.8 of these procedures.

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