

## **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 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. Accelerated Grade Placement – The movement of a student out of the normal progression to an advanced grade.
- B. Constructed Response – An answer developed solely by the student to a short answer or essay question or other assessment task.
- C. Effort Code/Comment – Letter code or a comment indicating the level of effort demonstrated by a student in each subject area and learning behavior.
- D. Essential Curriculum – Educational goals, content, and skills that are important for all students to learn.
- E. Individualized Education Program (IEP) – A written plan for a student with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised by the IEP team.
- F. 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.
- G. Grade – A letter indicating a measure of performance related to achievement of course objectives.

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- H. Grade Level Performance – Acquisition of skills as defined in the Howard County Essential Curriculum.
- I. Instructional Level – A term that indicates the instructional level at which the student is working.
- J. Interim/Progress Report – A report reflecting the progress of a student through the date of issuance.
- K. Lawful (Excused) Absence – An absence for any portion of the day under the following conditions:
- Death in the immediate family
  - Illness of the student
  - Court summons
  - Hazardous weather conditions
  - Work approved or sponsored by the school
  - Observance of a religious holiday
  - State emergency
  - Suspension
  - Lack of authorized transportation
  - Other emergency or sufficient circumstances
- L. Marking Period – A segment of the school year during which instruction is delivered, student pupil 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:
- Biological parent – Natural begetter of the student; mother or father.
  - Adoptive parent – Person who has legally adopted the student.
  - Custodian – Person or agency appointed by the court as the legal custodian of the student and granted parental rights and privileges.
  - Guardian – Person who has been placed by the court in charge of the affairs of the student and granted parental rights and privileges.
  - Caretaker – 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 of the minor.
- O. Promotion – The normal progression of a student from one grade to the next based upon a demonstrated ability to achieve at expected levels of performance.
- P. 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).

- Q. Report Card – Document that records the student’s grades, attendance, and other information.
- R. Retention – The act of retaining a student in a particular grade based upon a demonstrated inability to achieve at expected levels of performance.
- S. Rubric – A scoring guide used to evaluate the quality of students' constructed responses.
- T. School/Grade Team – A group composed of teachers, counselors, the school principal or other administrators, and other appropriate staff personnel.
- U. 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.
- V. Student Records Systems Card (Permanent Record Card) – Record by grade level of courses, tests, competency requirements, and credits earned by a student.
- W. 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 used to reflect student achievement for Pre K-8 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 Pre K-8 are derived from a compilation of assessments from that entire marking period up to the point of the progress report or report card.
    - a. Grades in Pre K-2 are the following:
      - i. I - Independent
      - ii. W- With assistance
      - iii. N - Not apparent at this time
    - b. Grades in 3-8 are the following:
      - i. A (90-100%) - Outstanding level
      - ii. B (80-89%) - High level
      - iii. C (70-79%) - Satisfactory level
      - iv. D (60-69%) - Low level
      - v. 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 a 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. Effort codes/comments
  - a. Effort Codes for Pre K-5 are the following:
    - i. 1 - Outstanding (consistent)
    - ii. 2 - Satisfactory (most of the time)
    - iii. 3 - Needs improvement (inconsistent)
  - b. For 6-8, teachers may comment on effort and work habits in individual subject areas.
3. Instructional levels  
For K-8, instructional levels (above, on, or below grade level) for reading and mathematics indicate student performance in relation to grade level expectations.
4. Make Up Work
  - a. A student may make up and receive a recorded grade for work missed due to a lawful absence. Students returning from lawful absences 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.
5. The grading and return of student work will generally occur within three weeks.

## B. Reporting

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

1. Report Cards
  - a. 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.
  - b. Parents will be informed of the report card distribution dates.
2. Interim/Progress Reports
  - a. Interim/Progress Reports are issued at the midpoint of each marking period and reflect the student's progress from the beginning of the marking period through the date of issuance.
  - b. Parents will be notified of interim report distribution dates.

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 assure 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, Promotion, Retention and Accelerated Grade Placement

1. Academic Intervention

When the performance of any K-8 student is below grade level expectations, the teacher and/or grade level team must, with the knowledge and appropriate participation of parents, develop strategies and apply appropriate academic interventions to assist the student with achievement.
  
2. Promotion

Students will be promoted from grade to grade based on successful achievement of the essential curriculum in the core subjects of English, reading, mathematics, social studies, and science. Successful achievement is measured by the grade level of "C" or better in these subjects in grades 3-8 and by a grade of "I" or "W" in grades 1-2. The principal may decide, upon recommendation of the school/grade level team, to promote students who have not achieved these grades in all core subjects.
  
3. Retention
  - a. Any K-8 student not on grade level in reading and mathematics will automatically be considered for retention.
  - b. Any student in grade 6 through grade 8 must meet the following requirements or automatically be considered for retention.
    - i. Grade 6 to 7: A student must pass all courses and receive a final grade of not lower than "C" in the core subjects (English, social studies, reading, mathematics and science). A student who does not meet this requirement may be recommended to attend summer school.
    - ii. Grade 7 to 8: A student must pass all courses and receive a final grade of not lower than "C" in the core subjects (English, social studies, reading, mathematics and science). A student who does not meet this requirement may be recommended to attend summer school.

- iii. Grade 8 to 9:
  - a. A student must pass all courses and receive a final grade of not lower than "C" in the core subjects (English, social studies, reading, mathematics and science). A student who does not meet this requirement may be recommended to attend summer school.
  - b. Any student below grade level in reading and/or mathematics at the end of 8th grade (as shown on the student's report card) will be required to participate in appropriate interventions, based on academic need as determined by the middle school principal. Interventions may include summer school and/or designated reading and/or mathematics intervention courses in 9th grade.
  - c. A parent may request that a principal consider retention of a student based on factors that may not be evident in the grade level assessments.
  - d. The IEP team shall consider the possible retention of a diploma-bound special education student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
  - e. The provisions of this policy do not apply to a certificate-bound special education student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
4. Accelerated Grade Placement
  - a. A principal may, upon the recommendation of a school/grade team or parent, consider accelerating a student to an advanced grade when he/she consistently demonstrates the ability to achieve at a higher level than expected in the essential curriculum and as measured by quarterly, teacher made and other assessments, and by teacher observations.
  - b. The principal will decide whether to move the student to an advanced grade 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
    - Developmental factors
    - Health factors
    - Emotional factors
    - Report card
    - IEP
    - 504 Plan (SEE POLICY 9060, REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 COMPLIANCE: SECTION 504)
  - c. Students will not be accelerated to advanced grades against the wishes of their parent/guardian.

**V. Compliance**

- A. Principals will communicate annually information regarding promotion, retention, and accelerated grade placement to all students, parents and staff.
- B. The principal is responsible for 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 are responsible for communicating 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
  - COMAR 13A.08.01.03
  - COMAR 13A.08.01.04
- B. Other Board Policies
  - 9010 Attendance
  - 9070 Academic Eligibility for High School Extracurricular Activities

**VIII. History**

ADOPTED: June 27, 1991

REVIEWED: July 1, 2012

MODIFIED:

REVISED: June 10, 1999

May 25, 2000

June 14, 2001

July 13, 2001

January 27, 2005

EFFECTIVE: July 1, 2005

**GRADING AND REPORTING:**  
**PRE-KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADE 8**

Effective: August 16, 2012

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**I. Dissemination**

The principal is directed to inform all students, parents and staff of the provisions of this policy annually and at other times as appropriate. This may include, but is not limited to the following:

- 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, etc.
- D. Posting the information on a bulletin board.
- E. Making the information available to new students and their parents through the registration process.

**II. Grading**

- A. Grades in Pre K-8 are derived from a compilation of assessments from the entire marking period. These include the following:
  - 1. Classroom participation
  - 2. Teacher observation
  - 3. Quizzes, tests, projects and other teacher-made assessments
  - 4. HCPSS assessments
  - 5. Homework
  - 6. Classwork
- B. Effort codes/comments in Pre K-8 are derived from a compilation of demonstrated attributes. These include the following:
  - 1. Task commitment
  - 2. Class participation
  - 3. Quality and quantity of work
  - 4. Timely completion of class and homework assignments
  - 5. Class preparation



6. Class attendance and punctuality
  7. I (Incomplete) Codes
    - a. I codes will only be issued, upon approval of the principal/designee, when a student has not been able to complete required course work due to legal absences or other extenuating circumstances.
    - b. I codes will 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/designee.
- C. The instructional levels for reading and math are as follows:
1. For K-8 reading, the following instructional levels are assigned based on objectives from the essential curriculum:
    - a. For K-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.
    - b. For 3-5 in 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.

- c. For 6-8 in reading class the instructional level is based on the following:

**ABOVE GRADE LEVEL**

The student

- Reads a variety of materials independently that are on and above grade level.
- Demonstrates comprehension by earning mostly threes on a zero to three rubric for written responses to reading questions.
- Responds orally with well developed answers to reading questions.
- Performs at a high or advanced level on standardized reading assessments.

**ON GRADE LEVEL**

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 a satisfactory or proficient level on standardized reading assessments.

**BELOW GRADE LEVEL**

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 an unsatisfactory or basic level on standardized reading assessments.

2. For K-8 in mathematics, the instructional codes/comments (above, on, or below grade level) are assigned as follows:

- a. Grades K-5:

#### ABOVE GRADE LEVEL

If, in general, the student

- Demonstrates satisfactory performance on the above-grade level objectives from the HCPSS Essential Curriculum by scoring at least 70% on above grade level unit 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 Essential Curriculum by scoring at least 70% on grade level unit 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 Essential Curriculum by scoring consistently lower than 70% on grade level unit assessments following instruction.
- Performs at the not-yet-satisfactory level on county mathematics assessments.
- Performs at the basic level on state mandated mathematics assessments.

- b. For grades 6 – 8 in mathematics class, the instructional level is based on the following:

#### ABOVE GRADE LEVEL

The student is in a mathematics class that is one year or more above grade level, has met local assessment standards and/or is earning a C or above in the course. Above grade level courses are these:

- Grade 6: Middle School Mathematics 2 or Pre-Algebra
- Grade 7: Pre-Algebra or Algebra/Data Analysis
- Grade 8: Algebra/Data Analysis or Geometry

#### ON GRADE LEVEL

The student is in an on grade level mathematics class, has met local assessment standards and/or is earning a C or above in the course. On grade level courses are the following:

- Grade 6: Middle School Mathematics 1
- Grade 7: Middle School Mathematics 2
- Grade 8: Pre-Algebra

#### BELOW GRADE LEVEL

The student is in an on grade level mathematics class and has not met two of the following standards:

- Satisfactory or above performance on the intervention assessment
- Satisfactory or above performance on the course assessments
- Earning a C or above in the course
- Demonstrating proficiency on state assessment objectives

#### D. Final Grades, 6-8

1. In computing numerical averages from letter grades, the following equivalents quality points will be used:  
A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, E = 0
2. In calculating final report card grades, quality point equivalents are averaged. The results are translated using the follow 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

3. Student grades may not be subject to a 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.

### III. Reporting

#### A. Interim/Progress Reports, Pre K-8

1. At the midpoint of each marking period teachers have a responsibility to notify the parent in writing concerning student progress. All students will receive interim/progress reports.
2. Teachers must also notify the parent, when appropriate, of unsatisfactory progress throughout the marking period.

#### B. Report Cards, Pre K-8

1. Report cards are distributed at the conclusion of each marking period.
2. Final report cards will be distributed at the end of the school year.

#### **IV. Academic Intervention, Promotion, Retention and Accelerated Grade Placement**

##### **A. Academic Intervention**

1. When a K-8 student performs below grade/curriculum expectations, the teacher/grade level team will, with the knowledge and appropriate participation of parents, provide additional assistance and opportunities for the student to improve his/her performance.

Interventions may include the following:

- A conference with the student
  - Differentiated instruction delivered within the regular classroom/school day
  - A change in class/subject placement
  - The involvement of a multidisciplinary student support team (including IEP team for special education students)
  - The involvement of support staff
  - Participation in supplemental academic activities (e.g., before/after school tutorials, mentoring)
  - Enrollment in summer school
2. In addition, for students who perform below grade level in reading and/or mathematics, the teacher and/or grade level team will develop a written plan to improve and monitor achievement.
  3. Grade level teams will review and modify student plans with the appropriate grade level teams for the following year.

##### **B. Consideration for Promotion**

1. The principal may, upon the recommendation of a school/grade team, promote a student who achieves at or above grade/curriculum expectations in the essential curriculum in core subject areas as measured by Howard County's grade level assessment system, teacher-made or selected assessments, and by teacher observations.
2. A special education student will be assessed based on the provisions of his/her Individualized Education Program (IEP)
3. After consideration of all factors, including parent input, the principal will decide if promotion is appropriate. Parents may appeal a decision to promote to the appropriate director of elementary or middle schools.

##### **C. Consideration for Retention**

1. With input from the appropriate school/grade team, the principal will consider a student for retention when a student fails to meet standards appropriate for the grade level. The principal may also consider for retention a student who is recommended by a school/grade team or parent for other reasons. The principal must consider whether the needs of the student are best met through

retention and offer the parent an opportunity to be included in the decision-making process.

2. The principal will make a decision based on a number of factors, which may include, but are not limited to the following:
  - Academic achievement level
  - Demonstrated progress in response to academic interventions
  - Age of the student
  - Previous retention(s)
  - Attendance record
  - Parental concerns
  - Developmental factors
  - Health factors
  - Emotional factors
  - Report Card
  - IEP
  - 504 Plan (See Policy 9060, Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Compliance: Section 504)
3. The IEP team will consider retention of a diploma-bound special education student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
4. The provisions of this policy do not apply to a certificate-bound special education student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
5. Any student not on or above grade level in reading and/or mathematics at the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade (as shown on the student's report card) will be required to participate in appropriate interventions, based on academic need as determined by the middle school principal. Interventions may include summer school and/or designated reading and/or mathematics intervention courses in 9<sup>th</sup> grade.
6. Parents may appeal a decision to retain to the appropriate administrative director.
7. If a student is retained in the current grade, the instructional team for that grade must review any academic interventions provided the student during the current academic year and make revisions designed to accelerate the student's pace of learning for the following year.

D. Consideration for Accelerated Grade Placement

1. A principal may, upon the recommendation of a school/grade team or parent, consider accelerating a student to an advanced grade when he/she consistently demonstrates the ability to achieve at a higher level than expected in the essential curriculum as measured by quarterly, teacher made and other assessments, and by teacher observations.
2. The principal will decide whether to move the student to an advanced grade 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
- Developmental factors
- Health factors
- Emotional factors
- Report card
- IEP
- 504 Plan (SEE POLICY 9060, REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 COMPLIANCE: SECTION 504)

3. Students will not be accelerated to advanced grades against the wishes of their parent/guardian.

**V. History**

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