

I. Policy Statement

The Board of Education of Howard County recognizes the value of digital education throughout the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). The Board values the need for expanded access to learning options through supplemental digital education. Digital education provides the opportunity to access education that might otherwise not be available or provides an alternative academic option for the student.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to specify criteria for the HCPSS for digital education courses which will provide students equitable access to instructional resources and utilize technology to individualize learning.

III. Definitions

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

- A. Digital Education – Learning facilitated by technology that offers students an element of control over the time, place, path, or pace of their learning.
- B. Digital Education Program Office – The department designated to implement digital education in the HCPSS.
- C. Digital Education Student – A student enrolled in a digital education course delivered by an HCPSS teacher or another online learning provider.
- D. Fully-Online Learning – A form of digital education delivered when 80 percent or more of the instruction is conducted online, the teacher and student are separated by distance, time, or both, and two-way communication is required between teacher and student.
- E. Non-HCPSS Employed Teacher – A certificated teacher provided by an online learning provider to teach fully-online courses to HCPSS students.
- F. Online Learning Provider – A third-party vendor, institute of higher education, or school district that provides digital education to students.

IV. Standards

- A. Development, design, and review of digital education courses will implement national, state, and local best practices.
- B. Digital education courses will be aligned with HCPSS academic standards.
- C. HCPSS digital education eligibility requirements and course availability will be made available through the formal course scheduling process.
- D. The HCPSS will use HCPSS employed teachers who meet established criteria for digital education to teach fully-online courses. When a qualified HCPSS employed teacher is not available, the HCPSS may contract an online learning provider to secure a non-HCPSS employed teacher.
- E. Priority for digital education course enrollment will be given to HCPSS students.
- F. The HCPSS will provide a fee schedule for HCPSS and non-HCPSS digital education students.
- G. Digital education students are subject to the grading, reporting, and eligibility guidelines outlined in Policy 8020 Grading and Reporting: High School with necessary modifications.
- H. All schools participating in digital education will provide school-based staff members who serve as liaisons to the Digital Education Program Office.
- I. All HCPSS schools will provide supervision for students while enrolled in a digital education course at a physical school during the traditional school day.
- J. Alternative programs will provide supervision for students outside of the traditional school day as appropriate.
- K. The HCPSS will report the status of digital education annually.

V. Responsibilities

- A. The HCPSS will establish criteria for course instruction for digital education courses.
- B. The HCPSS will assist digital education students to access the required hardware, software, and Internet connectivity that are available to other HCPSS students.
- C. The Superintendent/Designee will use program data to plan future course offerings and course delivery models available to HCPSS students, consistent with the standards outlined in Policy 8000 Curriculum.

- D. The Superintendent/Designee will publish eligibility requirements and digital education course availability annually.
- E. The Superintendent/Designee will communicate information annually regarding digital education courses to all students, parents, and staff.

VI. Delegation of Authority

The Superintendent is authorized to develop procedures for the implementation of this policy.

VII. References

- A. Legal
 - The Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §7-901, *et seq.*, Technology for Education
 - The Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §7-1002, Maryland Technology Academy
 - COMAR 13A.04.15, Digital Learning
- B. Other Board Policies
 - Policy 8000 Curriculum
 - Policy 8020 Grading and Reporting: High School
 - Policy 8080 Responsible Use of Technology and Social Media
 - Policy 9000 Student Residency, Eligibility, Enrollment and Assignment
 - Policy 9010 Attendance
- C. Relevant Data Sources
- D. Other
 - Catalog of Approved High School Courses
 - HCPSS Device Agreement Form
 - HCPSS Student Code of Conduct

VIII. History

ADOPTED: January 12, 2017

REVIEWED:

MODIFIED:

REVISED:

EFFECTIVE: July 1, 2017

I. Definitions

Within the context of these implementation procedures, the following definitions apply:

- A. Asynchronous Course – A digital education course where learning occurs in elapsed time and where the teacher and student do not share the same physical location.
- B. Blended Course – Digital education that occurs when a student learns part-time in a supervised physical setting and part-time through digital delivery of instruction; less than 80 percent of the instruction is conducted online.
- C. Credit Recovery – Credit awarded for the completion of a course where the student was previously enrolled but did not earn credit.
- D. 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.

- E. Supplemental Course – A digital education course taken in place of a course period at a physical school or outside of the traditional school day or school year.
- F. Synchronous Course – A digital education course where the students communicate with the teacher in real time but may not share the same physical location.

II. Course Access

- A. HCPSS students may be eligible to enroll in HCPSS digital education under the following:
 - 1. The school does not offer the course.
 - 2. There is a scheduling conflict which prevents the student from taking the course when it is available and there is no accessible alternative in future academic years.
 - 3. The student has been approved for early graduation or early college access demonstrated through their four-year plan.
 - 4. Home and Hospital Teaching Program.
 - 5. Administrative placement.
- B. Non-HCPSS students may apply to enroll in HCPSS digital education using the enrollment process published by the HCPSS. Enrollment is based on the number of available seats in published courses and the availability of courses based on HCPSS teacher staffing.
- C. The HCPSS may limit enrollments for all students based on the availability of courses and qualified teachers.
- D. The HCPSS will work with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), HCPSS Curriculum Offices, and schools to determine course needs for the following school year.

III. Enrollment Requirements

- A. HCPSS digital education is a program that offers supplemental courses. A student may enroll in up to two (2) supplemental full-credit digital education courses per single school year. The school will receive parent approval prior to enrollment, consistent with the formal course scheduling process.
- B. A student may exceed the registration course limit with approval from the school administrator and the Digital Education Program Office.

- C. Students who do not successfully earn credit in a digital education course, will appeal in writing to the school administrator and the Digital Education Program Office before enrolling.
- D. Credit recovery may be earned by students who have previously failed and completed a course. Students who are currently failing a course may participate in school-based interventions outside of the credit recovery program.

IV. Supervision, Attendance, and Participation

- A. Schools may schedule students in digital education courses at a physical school during or outside the traditional school day. When a digital education course is scheduled during the school day, students will be supervised by school personnel.

School personnel supervising digital education students are responsible for:

- 1. Recording the digital education student's daily attendance.
 - 2. Ensuring the health, safety, and general welfare of students.
- B. Attendance for digital education courses will apply based on when the course is taken:
 - 1. During the school day, digital education student's attendance follows the process outlined in Policy 9010 Attendance.
 - 2. Outside the school day, digital education student's attendance is tracked for all required face-to-face sessions (orientation, proctored exams, course instruction, labs, etc.).
 - 3. Policy 9010 Attendance does not apply to the blended or fully-online courses.
 - C. Participation requirements will be communicated to the digital education student prior to the beginning of the course.
 - 1. Participation is defined as the degree to which the digital education student is making adequate progress toward completing the course requirements by the posted end date.
 - 2. Digital education students who fail to participate may be withdrawn from the digital education course in accordance with Policy 8020 Grading and Reporting: High School.

V. Fees

- A. The HCPSS will provide a fee schedule for HCPSS and non-HCPSS digital education students, which may include application fees, course material fees, or tuition.
1. HCPSS students who meet the eligibility requirements are not responsible for course fees.
 2. HCPSS students who do not meet the eligibility requirements, or exceed the registration course limit, may enroll in additional approved courses with an online learning provider under a separate agreement that requires the parent to pay any tuition or course fees.
 3. Non-HCPSS students enrolled in HCPSS digital education will be charged a fee based on the fee schedule.
- B. Fees are non-refundable unless otherwise specified in the fee schedule. The schedule will include options for tuition reduction based on student circumstance.

VI. Curriculum Review, Design, and Development

The HCPSS will use the following to inform digital education courses:

- A. In order to offer fully-online courses, the HCPSS will comply with COMAR. In the event a fully-online course has not been approved by MSDE, the HCPSS may conduct a review and submit its results to MSDE for approval.
- B. The course expectations for student-to-teacher communication and academic support meet nationally recognized professional standards and are described as such in a course syllabus.

VII. Teacher Criteria

- A. HCPSS teachers teaching a fully-online course will hold a state-level certification in the content area. In addition, teachers will meet the following criteria:
1. Completed online teaching preparation course.
 2. Completed a digital education mentoring experience.
- B. The HCPSS will include the following contract language with the online learning provider when using non-HCPSS teachers to teach fully-online courses:
1. Hold a state-level certification in the content area (for AP courses, have met the criteria for AP courses).

2. Completed online teaching preparation course.
 3. Received satisfactory evaluation from the online learning provider.
- C. Additional staff may work with digital education students in a supporting role (site-based mentor, supervising teacher, paraeducator, special educator, etc.). Supporting staff may not grade student work but may provide other academic and non-academic supports.
- D. The delivery of instruction occurs when the digital education student interacts with the digital education teacher and related digital content and receives ongoing assistance and assessment of learning. The instruction may include approved curriculum developed by HCPSS or online learning providers.

VIII. School Responsibilities

- A. HCPSS schools will provide liaisons to work with the Digital Education Program Office. The school's liaisons will assist in disseminating information regarding digital education to students, parents, school staff, and administration. The liaisons may also facilitate:
1. Site-based mentoring.
 2. Scheduling digital education student supervision.
 3. Monitoring academic progress.
- B. The responsibilities of the liaisons can be shared between an administrator and school staff. Schools will match the liaisons' responsibilities with staff members to best meet the needs of the students and the school.
- C. The school will provide information on a digital education student's progress and final credits earned to the student and the student's parent.

IX. Technology Access

- A. Students using a personal device or HCPSS-owned device are responsible for the use of the device in accordance with Policy 8080 Responsible Use of Technology and Social Media and the HCPSS Student Code of Conduct.
- B. Students using an HCPSS-owned device are required to complete an HCPSS Device Agreement Form.

X. Grading and Progress Reporting

- A. Digital education students enrolled in synchronous courses are subject to grading, reporting, and eligibility guidelines outlined in Policy 8020 Grading and Reporting: High School.

- B. Digital education students enrolled in asynchronous courses are subject to grading, reporting, and eligibility guidelines outlined in Policy 8020 Grading and Reporting: High School with modifications, such as:
1. Marking Period
 - a. The start and end dates for course instruction may be different than the traditional school calendar.
 - b. Marking period grades will be earned by semester.
 2. End of Semester Examinations

End of semester examinations may be scheduled at a time outside the traditional school calendar exam window.
 3. Reporting

Course names are listed on interim and quarterly report cards; however, grades are only included on the final report card.
- C. When a course is taken as a combination of traditional face-to-face courses and digital education, the digital education grades are averaged proportionately with classroom grades and placed on the report card.
- D. When a course is taken as credit recovery, the final grade from taking the course originally and for retaking the course will both be included in the cumulative GPA and will be recorded on the transcript.
- E. Digital education students are expected to monitor their own progress daily. Parents and school counselors may receive progress reports through the student, the Digital Education Program Office, or the online learning provider.
- F. Students may enroll in a digital education course after the posted withdraw deadline if they are able to complete the course requirements by the posted end date.

XI. Program Reporting

- A. The HCPSS will prepare a yearly update that may include the following:
1. Number of digital education student enrollments.
 2. Number and type of courses taken.
 3. Completion/retention data.
 4. Stakeholder survey data.
 5. HCPSS fully-online teacher summary.
 6. Non-HCPSS fully-online teacher summary.

- B. The HCPSS will review and evaluate the course delivery models available to HCPSS students.

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