

# REGULATION

## MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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**Related Entries:** ACE, ACF, IEA, IEB, IED

**Responsible Office:** Instruction and Program Development

### School Academic Grouping Practices

#### I. PURPOSE

To establish standards for grouping students to facilitate learning

#### II. BACKGROUND

In organizing for instruction, many schools develop criteria for grouping students to facilitate learning -- either as class groups or within classes. While grouping may be by chance, more often students are assigned to an instructional group based on a prerequisite level of experience in school, ability level or achievement in a subject or specific skill, or other predetermined criteria that are predictors of success in that area. Grouping should always increase student opportunity for success. No grouping plan should be static; rather, it should promote flexibility to meet students' changing needs and achievements. When a school offers a sequential range of courses or an advanced placement course, students should be encouraged to participate in the class group for which they show readiness on the basis of prior achievement or potential.

#### III. PROCEDURES

- A. The decision to group students on the basis of learning readiness is made by the school staff. Grouping can be justified only if it enhances a student's ability to learn, offers intellectual challenge, and facilitates lesson planning and instruction for the teacher. Grouping shall never be used to create or support a system of discrimination on the basis of economic status, intellectual ability, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, or disability.
- B. The principal will have an explicit plan for grouping students and will monitor grouping practices to ensure that no student is excluded because of economic status, intellectual ability, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, or disability. The principal will ensure educational equity, that students experience a variety of flexible groupings, and that student progress is monitored.

- C. Grouping within a class for specific instructional objectives should be flexible and continuously changing, based on the immediate instructional needs of the students. Each school staff will develop criteria for this type of grouping which is made available to parents or students upon request.
- D. Grouping practices must not lock a student into an inflexible system of class assignment. Grouping should be used primarily to facilitate the learning of skills rather than merely to cover subject matter. A class should be regrouped and students moved to more advanced groups when they attain a desired level of skill achievement. Progress of students must be monitored on a regular basis so appropriate changes can be made.
- E. Grouping within classes should give able students the opportunity to receive expanded or enrichment experiences and less able students greater access to remediation, in addition to achieving overall class objectives.
- F. When establishing class groups, a number of criteria that are directly related to the instructional objectives of the subject will be considered, such as:
  - 1. Special needs, interests, and aptitudes of students
  - 2. Recommendations of teachers, counselors, and parents
  - 3. Past achievement of the student indicated by grades, standardized achievement tests, or courses completed
  - 4. Recent verbal and nonverbal ability scores
  - 5. Scores on diagnostic and criterion-referenced tests, prepared and administered by the local school academic department
  - 6. Portfolios or work samples
  - 7. Requests of students
- G. The *MCPS Program of Studies* will include the specific criteria for courses or levels of subjects offered in Grades 6-12, including prerequisites for enrollment in sequential and advanced placement courses. All courses except those with specific prerequisites shall have open enrollment.

- H. Criteria for grouping in each secondary school will be published in the description of course offerings that is distributed to students and parents in advance of student course selection.
- I. The principal will be responsible for class assignments after students have selected appropriate courses with the approval of parents/guardians.
- J. Schools that utilize a grouping procedure will review their specific processes and criteria each year during the first semester so that needed changes can be made before beginning the registration process of the following year.

**IV. RESPONSIBILITIES**

Each principal is responsible for:

1. Assuring that grouping practices do not result in racially segregated classes or disproportionate distribution of students by gender and race
2. Providing information on class grouping criteria to students and to parents/guardians using established communication practices such as Parent and Student Orientation meetings, articulation meetings, parent conferences, and school newsletters
3. Maintaining open channels of communication among staff, students, and parents to develop full understanding of placement criteria and grouping practices

*Administrative History:* Formerly Regulation No. 510-5, August 3, 1977; revised October 20, 1995.