Academic Eligibility for Middle School Students Who Participate in Interscholastic Athletics

I. PURPOSE

To delineate systemwide academic eligibility guidelines for middle school students who participate in interscholastic athletics.

II. BACKGROUND

This regulation will standardize academic eligibility procedures to be used by middle school students who choose to participate in any athletic stipend extracurricular activity, as listed in the Negotiated Agreement Between Montgomery County Education Association and the Board of Education of Montgomery County. Additionally, there is an expectation that there will be other non-athletic activities with open enrollment in all Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) middle schools, thereby creating opportunities for participation for all students, regardless of academic eligibility.

III. DEFINITIONS

A. Athletic Activities Requiring Academic Eligibility are defined as those activities listed as eligible for athletic stipends in the Negotiated Agreement Between Montgomery County Education Association and the Board of Education of Montgomery County.

B. 2.0 Average is the minimum grade average for all classes in which the student was scheduled during the previous grading period. It is not a student's overall Grade Point Average (GPA).

C. Failing Grade is any grade that indicates an unacceptable level of performance, including E and NC.

D. Eligibility Period is the period from the day that a report card is issued and is sustained until the day the next report card is issued.
IV. PROCEDURES

A. Eligibility

1. Students who have a 2.0 average with no more than one failing grade in the previous marking period will be academically eligible to participate or practice during the next marking period. Eligibility standards become effective as of a student’s second marking period in middle school, as determined by their marking period average for the first marking period of middle school.

A multi-hour course is considered one subject. When computing the marking period grade average, the multi-hour course grade will be counted once for each hour the course is offered; e.g., if the course is a three-period course, the grade should be counted three times in determining the marking period grade average. However, the letter grade for a multi-hour course will appear only once on the report card.

2. Grades reported as incomplete as a result of legally excused absences shall be considered passing grades until changed. Incomplete grades that are not changed to passing grades within 10 school days after report cards are issued will be considered failing grades for eligibility purposes until they are changed.

3. Student Withdrawal from Courses

a) A student may withdraw 25 days or fewer into a course without penalty or record.

b) When a student withdraws from a course after day 25, the student will be given the grade at the time of the withdrawal from the course, and that grade will be factored into the marking period grade average for the purpose of academic eligibility only.

4. When a student withdraws from an MCPS middle school after 25 days of a marking period, the grades the student has earned at the time of withdrawal will be used to determine academic eligibility for an ensuing sport season.

5. When a student transfers from an MCPS middle school to a non-MCPS school and subsequently reenters MCPS, the grades from the non-MCPS school will be used to determine academic eligibility, provided the student has attended the non-MCPS school for at least one entire marking period. If
the student has not completed at least one marking period at the non-MCPS school, the grades from the last MCPS school the student attended will be used to determine eligibility.

6. On the day that the report card is issued, each athletic coordinator or coach will verify student eligibility.

7. Middle school students who do not maintain a 2.0 average with no more than one failing grade during the final (fourth) marking period will not be eligible in the fall. Students may repeat failed courses in summer school; however, if a failed course is not offered during the summer session, the student will be allowed to take another course in the same subject area, if available. If such a course is not available, the student and the student’s counselor will decide on an alternate course and/or subject area. The summer session grade will replace the lowest course grade from the previous marking period and be factored in to determine the 2.0 minimum average for participation.

B. Exceptions

1. Students who enter an MCPS middle school for the first time are automatically academically eligible for the marking period they enroll. Eligibility is determined at the conclusion of each marking period thereafter, as set forth in section IV.A.1.

2. An unsatisfactory evaluation in a non-graded course is not considered failing for student eligibility.

3. Students in middle school who are not academically eligible may petition the coach not less than two weeks after the distribution of report cards to be reinstated in an activity if they have shown evidence of progress toward meeting eligibility standards. Middle school principals will make the final decisions regarding eligibility of middle school students.

C. Local School Responsibilities

1. School staff should communicate in writing to students and parents a list of opportunities for all students to participate in extracurricular activities, including interscholastic athletics.

2. Schools should have a broad range of activities for staff to refer students to in order to help students retain or regain academic eligibility for all interscholastic athletics, including contracts, tutoring programs, mentoring.
and monitoring programs, academic support classes and counseling, study halls during or after school, outreach programs, and/or other programs.

3. School staff should develop mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of support programs.

Related Source: Code of Maryland Regulations §§13A.06.03.01 and .02

Regulation History: New Regulation, December 18, 1996; revised June 21, 2006; revised February 23, 2007; revised October 8, 2021.