

A. Purpose

1. To establish a clear framework for grading practices and procedures within Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS).
2. To ensure that grades are determined in a consistent manner.

B. Background

1. The purpose of grades is to provide feedback to students, parents, and educators about student performance and achievement in the standards. Grades help inform teachers, students, and parents about the academic areas in which students approach, meet, or exceed expectations.
2. To support students in meeting or exceeding expectations, classroom teachers organize and structure learning activities to evaluate evidence of student learning in the standards. A variety of options are available to support students to master the standards. *See* section C(10)(a)-(c). Finally, school leaders, teachers, other staff, and parents work as partners to ensure students get any needed supports.
3. Grades (letters, numbers, or symbols) are assigned during the report card term for assignments, projects, quizzes, and tests. They are also assigned at the end of the report card term as a formal grade on the report card to represent achievement for the entire marking term.

C. Definitions

1. “Alternate Academic Achievement Standards” is defined to mean the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessments within FCPS tailored for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Access to these standards is determined by an IEP team based on the following criteria: the student has a “significant cognitive disability”; the student is learning content derived from Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards; and the student requires extensive, direct, individualized, and repeated instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in adapted and modified curriculum. Students receiving an alternate curriculum are eligible for the Maryland Alternate Assessments and are working towards a certificate of completion.
2. “Essential Curriculum Standards” is defined to mean specific statements that describe the learning outcomes for each course or grade level in specific content areas. Essential curriculum standards are aligned to the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards or national content standards.

3. “Essential Curriculum with Extension” is defined to mean curriculum that includes and also extends beyond the essential curriculum to deepen and broaden the knowledge and skills listed. Extension is provided when students demonstrate mastery of the essential curriculum and readiness for advanced curricular study.
4. “Essential Curriculum with Intervention” – is defined to mean curriculum that includes the essential curriculum as well as additional intervention supports. *See* section C(10)(a)-(c) below. These supports are provided when students demonstrate significant deficits in essential skills needed to meet the standards and requirements for a course of study.
5. “Grade” is defined to mean a letter, number, or symbol that indicates student performance of the essential curriculum being studied.
6. “Habits of Work” is defined to mean the non-academic learner behaviors that communicate the degree to which students are actively engaged in their own learning process.
7. “IEP Team” is defined to mean a group of individuals to include parents 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 in the least restrictive environment.
8. “Individualized Education Plan” (IEP) is defined as a plan or program developed to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law and is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives specialized instruction and related services.
9. “Marking Term” is defined to mean the segment of the school year during which instruction is delivered, student progress is monitored, and grades are issued. There are four (4) marking terms consisting of nine (9) weeks each.
10. “Multi-Tiered System of Supports” (MTSS) is defined to mean a proactive and preventive framework that integrates data, instruction, and intervention to maximize student achievement and support their social, emotional, and behavior needs. MTSS includes three (3) tiers: “Tier I”; “Tier II”; and “Tier III”.
 - a. “Tier I” is defined as instruction on the core curriculum where all students receive high quality instruction that is responsive and differentiated (Framework for Teaching). Assessments include evidence-based universal screening, formative, and summative assessments. An effective system of supports begins with standards-aligned curricula, team-based collaborative planning (Accelerated Learning Process), and a strong evidence-based instructional approach based on the Universal Design for Learning to address the individual characteristics of students. Some students or groups of students may require additional instruction on the Core Curriculum as a part of Tier I Instruction.
 - b. “Tier II” is defined as a supplemental intervention where the student or small groups of students receive explicit instruction on content that requires prerequisite support. Diagnostic assessments assist in targeting instructional objectives. Frequent progress monitoring occurs with the goal of Supplemental Intervention being brief, but focused.

- c. “Tier III” is defined as an intensive intervention where the student or small groups of students receive intensive individualized instruction on content that is significantly below their grade level standards and is designed to remedy error patterns. The frequency of progress monitoring increases (daily to weekly) and allows for individualized instruction. The time required in the intervention may increase.
11. “Parent” is defined to mean any one of the following, recognized as the adult(s) legally responsible for the student:
 - a. Biological Parent – A natural parent whose parental rights have not been terminated;
 - b. Adoptive Parent – A person who has legally adopted the student and whose parental rights have not been terminated;
 - c. Custodian – A person or an agency appointed by the court as the legal custodian of the student and granted parental rights and responsibilities;
 - d. Guardian – A person who has been placed by the court in charge of the affairs of the student and granted parental rights and responsibilities;
 - e. Caregiver – An adult resident of Frederick 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) or has been issued a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Verification of Release form entering into a custodial arrangement with the federal government; or,
 - f. 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.
 12. “Performance Level” is defined to mean a description of a student’s current achievement in relation to each performance standard.
 13. “Performance Standards” is defined to mean broad statements that describe what students are expected to achieve. Each performance standard requires students to learn multiple essential curriculum standards.
 14. “Report Card” is defined to mean a document that records a student’s academic grades, habits of work, attendance, and other information for each of the four (4) marking terms.
 15. “Requirements” is defined to mean factors, in addition to the standards (essential curriculum indicators), that may be reflected in the grade. *See* section D(1).
 16. “Screening Assessment” is defined to mean a brief, valid, and reliable measurement procedure that is used to identify or predict whether a student may be:
 - a. Unable to meet performance standards; or
 - b. In need of enrichment or acceleration.
 17. “Semester” is defined as two (2) terms of nine (9) weeks each totaling eighteen (18) weeks.

18. “Supplemental Reading Instruction” is defined to mean evidence-based, sequential, systematic, explicit, and cumulative instruction or intervention to mastery of foundational reading skills including phonological or phonemic awareness and processing, phonics, and vocabulary to support development of decoding, spelling, fluency, and reading comprehension skills to meet grade level curriculum.
19. “Term Grade” is defined to mean a grade (letter, number, or symbol) that indicates student mastery of standards. The term grade is recorded on the report card.

D. Procedures

1. Factors That Help Determine Grades

- a. Grades are a reflection of student achievement. As such, grading decisions at all levels reflect a student’s current progress in mastering essential curriculum standards. Grades should not reflect habits of work such as participation and effort. Meeting the academic requirements established by the classroom teacher should focus on:
 - i. Work that demonstrates achievement of essential curriculum.
 - ii. Progress in achieving mastery of essential curriculum.
 - iii. Independent application of knowledge, skills and processes.
- b. The design of classroom and homework activities should take into account the varied needs of students.
- c. Any impact on grades due to attendance should be in accordance with the guidelines in [FCPS Regulation 400-98](#), *Student Attendance*.

2. Responsibilities for Curriculum, Instruction, and Grading

- a. The Board of Education of Frederick County (Board) approves the essential curriculum and course of study to be taught. See [Board Policy 500](#), *Approval of Curriculum and Instructional Materials*. The course of study includes a detailed program of study for a course that includes the essential curriculum for the course, an approved text resource for the course (if required), recommended hours/credits for the course and expected outcomes for the course. The essential curriculum and courses of study may not be changed in substance or content without the approval of the Board.
- b. Curriculum specialists and/or supervisors work with classroom teachers to develop curriculum instructional resources (planning tools, supplemental guidelines, units and sample lesson plans) for the approved essential curriculum and course of study.
- c. School administrators and teachers organize the instructional program in accordance with the approved essential curriculum and courses of study.
- d. Prior to the beginning of each school year or semester, each teacher shall establish the class requirements to be used in each class for the purpose of assigning term grades. These requirements will align with the guidelines for grading provided at both the system and school level. Information about the course of study and class requirements for grading shall be provided to students in writing within the first week of the school year or semester. Students will be asked to review the information and requirements with their parents in a manner that is developmentally appropriate. Teachers have flexibility in designing standards-based instruction that accommodates teaching styles, academic levels, and developmental differences.

- e. Teachers are expected to provide frequent opportunities for students to demonstrate progress towards achieving the standards.
 - f. Teachers monitor and informally evaluate student work daily, and provide ongoing oral and written feedback throughout the learning process. Teachers will maintain a formal written record of each student’s work and progress on a regular basis. The record must contain at least one grade per week in the system-identified online grading platform.
 - g. Written work or production should be evaluated and returned to the student as soon as possible. Once the student has examined this work, the teacher may retain it for record purposes. Upon request of the student, such retained work shall be available during the current school year for review under teacher supervision.
 - h. Teachers are expected to review their assignment of grades for student work and tests on a regular basis. When averaging grades using a percentage scale, assigning a grade of “0” can significantly lower the overall student grade. Therefore, when using a percentage scale, teachers are encouraged to use a minimum grade of 50% for any assignment that a student attempts. When teachers use a proficiency scale for grading, the impact of assigning a “0” is less severe. It can effectively communicate that students have not submitted any evidence towards achieving proficiency in the standards.
 - i. Appropriate professional learning will occur to promote equitable grading practices with a goal of minimizing bias and ensuring a grade reflects evidence of student achievement in the standards.
 - j. Students’ habits of work may have direct influence on achievement in the classroom; however, these learner behaviors should not be calculated into a student’s standards-based academic grade. These habits will be reported and communicated to students and parents as appropriate. Misbehavior is to be handled according to system and school discipline policies and procedures.
 - k. Teachers shall assign homework as appropriate at all levels for all students, taking into account the varying needs of students they serve. Homework should be assigned in accordance with the guidelines in [FCPS Regulation 500-15](#), *Homework Guidelines*.
 - l. Teachers are responsible for assigning grades for student standards-aligned work during the marking term.
 - m. Teachers are responsible for issuing interim reports to notify students and parents of unsatisfactory or failing student performance. Interim reports should be issued in accordance with the guidelines in [FCPS Regulation 500-13](#), *Interim Report Procedures*.
 - n. Teachers are responsible for assigning term grades for the report card. Report cards are issued on specified dates four (4) times during the school year.
3. **Responsibilities for “Supplemental Reading Instruction”.** If results from the required reading screening per [Board Policy 511](#), *Assessments* indicates a student is at risk of reading difficulties, staff will provide supplemental reading instruction to address the student’s identified areas of need; and provide a notification letter to the parent or guardian of the student that includes the screening results and a description of the supplemental reading instruction that will be provided to the student.
4. **Special Education**
- a. **Students Accessing Essential Curriculum**

- i. Report card grades should be determined based on a student’s mastery of the essential curriculum standards with access to IEP accommodations and supplementary aids and services.
 - ii. Determination of report card grades in response to a student’s IEP should be a collaborative process between general educators and special educators.
 - iii. In addition to report card grades, special education case managers, in collaboration with all service providers and the general education teacher, are required to report quarterly progress on the student’s IEP goals.
- b. Students Accessing Alternate Academic Achievement Standards**
- i. Report card grades should be determined based on a student’s mastery of the Alternate Academic Achievement standards.
 - ii. Determination of report card grades in response to a student’s IEP should be a collaborative process between:
 - 1. General educators and special educators, if a student is accessing a general education class for all or part of the school day; or
 - 2. Special educators and additional members of the school-based IEP team, if a student is accessing a specialized program.
 - iii. In addition to report card grades, special education case managers, in collaboration with all service providers, are required to report quarterly progress on the student’s IEP goals.
- c. Students Accessing a Specialized Program**
- i. Report card grades should be determined based on a student’s mastery of the Alternate Academic Achievement Standards or the essential curriculum standards, according to their IEP.
 - ii. Determination of report card grades in response to a student’s IEP should be a collaborative process between special educators and additional members of the school-based IEP team.
 - iii. In addition to report card grades, special education case managers, in collaboration with all service providers, are required to report quarterly progress on the student’s IEP goals.

5. **Term Grades for the Report Card.** In elementary school, students receive term grades (letters, numbers, or symbols) on the report card evaluating success in meeting curriculum standards and requirements as well as a number code evaluating student habits of work.
- a. **Grades Pre-K to 5 Evaluation Code.** In grades Pre-K-5, the following evaluation code is used to indicate progress in student habits of work.

4 =	Consistently.
3 =	Most of the time.
2 =	Inconsistently.
1 =	Rarely.
0 =	Not demonstrating.

- b. **Grades Used in Grades Pre-K to 1.** An explanation of term grades used in grades Pre-K-1 is as follows:

EE	Exceeding expectations of grade level standards.	Consistently meets and/or exceeds curriculum standards and class requirements.
ME	Meeting expectations of grade level standards.	Frequently meets and/or exceeds curriculum standards and class requirements.
AE	Approaching expectations of grade level standards.	Generally meets curriculum standards and class requirements, though some curriculum standards and class requirements may remain as yet unmet.
DE	Developing expectations of grade level standards.	Meets some curriculum standards and class requirements, though many curriculum standards and class requirements remain as yet unmet.
NE	Not evaluated.	Standards were either not taught and/or assessed at this time.

- c. **Grades Used in Grades 2 to 5.** An explanation of term grades used in grades 2-5 (without plus or minus symbols) is as follows:

A	Exemplary Performance towards meeting standards.	Consistently meets and/or exceeds curriculum standards and class requirements.
B	Skilled Performance towards meeting standards.	Frequently meets and/or exceeds curriculum standards and class requirements.
C	Satisfactory Performance towards meeting standards.	Generally meets curriculum standards and class requirements, though some curriculum standards and class requirements may remain as yet unmet.
D	Minimally Acceptable Performance towards meeting standards.	Meets some curriculum standards and class requirements, though many curriculum standards and class requirements remain as yet unmet.
F	Unacceptable Performance towards meeting standards.	Meets few, if any, curriculum standards and class requirements.
NE	Not evaluated.	Standards were either not taught and/or assessed at this time.

- d. **Grades K to 5 Instructional Level.** In grades K-5, teachers also record an instructional level on the report card each term for language arts and mathematics using symbols as follows:

+	Receives Essential Curriculum with Extension.
√	Receives Essential Curriculum.
/	Receives Essential Curriculum with Intervention.
*	Receives Alternate Curriculum based on IEP.

e. **Extenuating Circumstances Requiring Principal Approval**

- i. **Incomplete Grades.** An incomplete grade of “I” may be given in a course in which a student has not completed the prescribed work by the end of the grading period. The grade of “I” (incomplete) will remain on the report card for no longer than two (2) weeks from the end of the marking period. At the end of two (2) weeks, the teacher will change the “I” to another appropriate grade and notify the student and parent. The building principal must approve all incomplete grades.
- ii. **Student with a Prolonged Illness.** A teacher may grant an extension for a two (2) week period. The building principal shall approve such an extension before it is granted.

f. **Procedures for Grade Changes**

- i. The timeline for final grade changes cannot exceed forty-five (45) school days following the last day of the grading period. See [COMAR 13A.03.02.08\(B\)\(5\)\(a\)](#).
- ii. **Teacher Initiated Grade Change.** – On those occasions where a teacher feels the final mark does not fairly reflect the final achievement of the student, the teacher may award a higher letter grade. The following documentation, at a minimum, is required within thirty (30) school days after the report card has been issued:
 - 1. Name of teacher requesting the grade change.
 - 2. Reason for the grade change.
 - 3. Signature of the person approving the grade change.
 - 4. Reason for approval.
 - 5. Date of approval.
 - 6. Signature of the Principal.

g. **Parent Appeal of a Grade.** – On those occasions where a parent feels the final grade does not fairly reflect the final achievement of the student, the following procedure should be followed:

- i. All questions about a student’s grade should be directed first to the classroom teacher within ten (10) school days after the report card has been issued.
- ii. If the matter remains unresolved, a student and/or parent may file a complaint with the principal indicating the reason for the dispute and the remedy sought. The principal will evaluate the complaint and provide a written response within ten (10) school days of receiving the complaint. Except as set forth in section D(5)(g)(iii) below, the principal’s decision is final in all matters concerning student grades.
- iii. A student and/or parent may appeal the principal’s decision for alleged violations of procedures or a student’s due process in accordance with [Board Policy 105, Appeal and Hearing Procedures](#).

6. **Timelines**

- a. Report cards will be issued on specified dates four (4) times during the school year.

- b. Interim reports should be issued in accordance with the interim procedures detailed in [FCPS Regulation 500-13, Interim Report Procedures](#).

E. Related Information

1. Board Policy

- a. [Policy 105](#), *Appeal and Hearing Procedures*
- b. [Policy 416](#), *Progress Reporting*
- c. [Policy 500](#), *Approval of Curriculum and Instructional Materials*

2. Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR)

- a. [COMAR 13A.03.02.08](#), *Grading and Reporting*

3. Federal Law

- a. Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (2015)
- b. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 20 USC § 1400, *et seq.*

4. FCPS Regulations

- a. [Regulation 400-98](#), *Student Attendance*
- b. [Regulation 500-13](#), *Interim Report Procedures*
- c. [Regulation 500-15](#), *Homework Guidelines*

F. Regulation History (Maintained by Legal Services)

<i>Responsible Office</i>	Curriculum, Instruction & Innovation
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