

POLICY

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Related Entries: ABA, ABA-RA, ABC, AEB, GEG-RA, IFA, IFA-RA, IKC, IKC-RA, ISB-RA, JEA-RA

Responsible Office: Curriculum and Instructional Programs

Related Sources: *Annotated Code of Maryland*, Education Article §7–205, *Code of Maryland Regulations* §13A.03.02.01, §§13A.03.02.03-05, §13A.03.02.10

Framework and Structure of High School Education

A. PURPOSE

To affirm the Board of Education’s (Board) commitment to providing a challenging and comprehensive high school program that meets and exceeds the graduation requirements of the state of Maryland, prepares all students for postsecondary education and the workplace, and equips students to gather and use information and collaborate with others to solve problems and make informed judgments on public and private concerns.

To provide guidance to staff members and community for organization of high schools and delivery of instructional programs that set high expectations for academic achievement for all students in an environment supportive of the social, emotional, and physical development of adolescents and young adults.

B. ISSUE

High school preparation is critical to success in college. Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) expects all students to complete high school prepared for success in postsecondary education and the world of work. The high school program ensures success for every student through a rigorous, comprehensive curriculum; relevant opportunities for students to clarify interests, goals, and plans for the future; a qualified and committed staff and leadership; a collaborative and flexible organizational structure; a differentiated instructional program; extracurricular activities; and actively involved parent and community stakeholders.

C. POSITION

1. School Culture

High schools maintain consistently high expectations for all students to acquire and develop lifelong learning skills, explore and envision a successful future, and make connections to post-high school life.

- a) Staff members believe that all students can learn at high levels and expect and encourage students to achieve at their full potential.
- b) The high school community is committed to equity, values diversity, and works actively to remove barriers to achievement so that student success is not predictable by race or ethnicity.
- c) Through instructional practices and extracurricular activities, students learn interpersonal skills necessary for healthy social, emotional, and intellectual growth. The school environment encourages and provides multiple opportunities for every student to be known well by one or more adults in the school.
- d) School leaders promote positive relationships among students, staff, and community members within a safe school environment. School leaders communicate clear behavioral expectations to students and staff.
- e) Staff, families, and community members work together for student achievement.
 - (1) School staff facilitate communication with the community in the languages spoken in the community whenever feasible.
 - (2) School staff work with students and parents to emphasize the importance of regular student attendance as an essential component of a quality learning experience.
 - (3) School leaders recognize and celebrate achievements of students, staff, and the community.
 - (4) Staff, families, and community members provide resources and options for service and work-based learning, mentoring relationships, and career activities.
- f) High school staff members provide the support students and families need to understand post-high school options, preparations required, and assistance available, thereby connecting current studies with future endeavors. Staff members provide ongoing support as follows:

- (1) Work with each student to plan a course of study and related activities that transitions the student into and through the high school years, and details the courses needed to meet academic and personal goals. Students shall satisfactorily complete a program of study beyond Grade 8, as described in MCPS Regulation ISB-RA, *High School Graduation Requirements*.
- (2) Encourage students to take rigorous courses that are relevant to their interests and prepare them to achieve their postsecondary goals.

2. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

MCPS implements high school curriculum, instruction, and assessment to ensure a high level of challenge for all high school students and meet the unique and changing needs of young adult learners.

a) Curriculum

- (1) The high school curriculum satisfies the graduation requirements of the Board and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The Board has the authority to specify requirements beyond minimum state requirements when it determines it is in the best interest of all students. MSDE requires 21 credits for graduation, of which 18 must be earned in specified courses. MCPS requires 22 credits, of which 19.5 must be earned in specified courses, including an additional credit in mathematics and an additional half credit in physical education, as further described in MCPS Regulation ISB-RA, *High School Graduation Requirements*.
- (2) High school course curricula encompass state and national standards to establish learning goals. The program of studies prepares students for success in postsecondary education and work by providing a variety of learning experiences to challenge all students. Curriculum will be reviewed in a manner consistent with Board Policy IFA, *Curriculum*, and MCPS Regulation IFA-RA, *Curriculum*.
- (3) Each high school provides a comprehensive program of studies. The Board ensures consistency of course offerings across high schools by approving certain essential courses as Category 1. The Board reviews curriculum for Category 1 courses and ensures adherence to systemwide assessment standards. All comprehensive high schools offer an appropriate range of Category 1 courses to provide the

opportunity for all students to earn MSDE and MCPS required graduation credits within four years.

- (4) The Board approves additional courses as Category 2. Category 2 courses are important for continuing, expanding, and enriching student understanding in a subject area. In addition, a Category 2 course may meet a graduation requirement. These courses will be offered when student interest, staffing, and budget permit.
- (5) All Category 1 and 2 courses are listed and described in the MCPS *High School Course Bulletin*.
- (6) Students may apply credits earned for coursework at institutions other than MCPS when planned and approved in accordance with conditions described in MCPS Regulation ISB-RA, *High School Graduation Requirements*.

b) Instruction

Instructional practices will incorporate a variety of methods, strategies, and resources that encourage students to be active and engaged learners.

- (1) Instructional practices align with relevant Board policies and MCPS regulations such as Board Policy IKA, *Grading and Reporting*; Board Policy IOA, *Gifted and Talented Education*; Board Policy IOD, *Education of English Language Learners*; Board Policy IOB, *Education of Students with Disabilities*; and MCPS Regulation IHB-RA, *School Academic Grouping Practices*.
- (2) High school instruction prepares students to comprehend, gather, evaluate, and synthesize information and collaborate with others to solve problems. Staff members prepare students as follows:
 - (a) Communicate high expectations for student achievement and success.
 - (b) Incorporate a variety of innovative and research-based methods, strategies, and resources including technology that evoke critical thinking and encourage students to be active, engaged, and lifelong learners.
 - (c) Use allocated instructional time efficiently and effectively.

- (d) Provide leadership opportunities for students as well as promote student discourse and effective self-expression.
- (e) Help each student meet his or her academic potential by providing differentiated instructional opportunities and resources as appropriate, such as acceleration, enrichment, support, and accommodations.
- (f) Utilize the special skills of all general, alternative, English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and special education staff members, in both the planning and implementation of instruction.

c) Assessment

Assessment, as set forth in Board Policy IKA, *Grading and Reporting*, is an integral part of the instructional cycle. A comprehensive assessment program, aligned with district, state, and national standards, includes the following:

- (1) Grading criteria that communicate expectations to students and parents in a clear and timely manner.
- (2) Pre-assessments, formative assessments, and summative assessments, which are used to plan and deliver instruction to meet learning goals, provide meaningful and timely feedback to students on their performance and offer varied opportunities for students to demonstrate learning.
- (3) Reteaching and reassessment within the instructional cycle to promote effective teaching and learning.
- (4) Ongoing and timely reporting of student achievement to students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the school system.
- (5) Consistency within and among schools.

3. Organizational Structure

MCPS administrators collaborate with school leadership teams, staff, parents, students, and the community regarding the organizational structure of their school and improvement plans, consistent with the priorities of the school system. Schools

promote and maintain high achievement by employing a variety of structures for teaching and learning.

- a) High school leaders employ flexible scheduling and maximize their resources to provide active and meaningful learning experiences that foster student achievement, ease student transitions, and facilitate program continuity.
- b) High school leaders develop learning communities within the school that foster student achievement, respond to student interests, and promote positive engagement among students and staff.
- c) Each school is staffed and organized to ensure appropriate educational opportunities for students with a variety of educational needs.
- d) High school leaders provide opportunities for teachers to use time effectively and efficiently to achieve the following:
 - (1) Plan and coordinate instructional delivery and assessment.
 - (2) Monitor individual student progress, meet with students, and communicate with parents.
 - (3) Engage in professional learning communities and other professional development opportunities.
- e) High school staff use instructional time during the student day effectively.
- f) High school staff provide opportunities for enrichment and academic support through before-school and after-school extended learning and extracurricular activities.
- g) High school staff effectively use communication tools to promote professional learning communities and facilitate productive interactions among students, teachers, parents, and other community stakeholders.

4. Leadership and Planning

MCPS administrators and school leadership teams collaborate with staff, students, parents, and the community to create, guide, manage, and inspire an effective learning community to ensure achievement by all students. Effective school leaders:

- a) Model the standards of the professional growth system for administrators, teachers, and supporting service personnel.

- b) Guide and monitor the implementation of a rigorous instructional program that sets the course to eliminate the achievement gap among students and is designed to prepare them to be college and career ready.
- c) Facilitate continuous improvement and implementation of the Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence.
- d) Collaborate with staff, students, parents, the community, and other stakeholders to develop and articulate a shared vision of the academic and individual needs of students, the direction for the school, and progress toward stated goals.
- e) Develop leadership in the school and empower the staff, students, parents, and the community in the decision-making process.
- f) Manage the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

5. Parent and Community Engagement and Communication

Consistent with Board Policy ABA, *Community Involvement*, and Board Policy ABC, *Parent and Family Involvement*, school staff, parents, and the community are partners in the social and intellectual development of students. Elements of this partnership include the following:

- a) Communication between families and school staff to provide information and solicit input and feedback regarding an individual student's educational experience, collaboration to support student learning outside of school, as well as opportunities for families to be involved in school and community activities and events.
- b) Parent, student, and community participation in school improvement teams and other advisory groups that set direction for the school, consistent with Board Policy AEB, *Strategic Planning for Continuous Improvement*.
- c) Collaboration with parent/teacher/student organizations, the community, businesses, and institutions of higher learning to bring outside resources to the school, make direct links between learning and careers, and provide authentic opportunities for student engagement.
- d) Parent advocacy and ongoing communication about MCPS policies, regulations, and practices.

6. Human Resources and Professional Development

MCPS recruits, employs, and retains high school staff members who possess the knowledge and skills to foster achievement and meet the needs of all high school students. The MCPS professional growth systems provide regular and systematic opportunities for all administrators, teachers, and supporting services professionals to increase their knowledge, skills, and capacity to continuously improve the teaching and learning process.

- a) Staff members are knowledgeable about the developmental characteristics of adolescents and communicate high expectations for all students.
- b) Staff members are skilled at developing positive relationships with students and parents and engaging them in the learning process.
- c) Staff members demonstrate content expertise and provide effective instruction.
- d) Staff demographics reflect, to the extent possible, the diverse population of MCPS.
- e) Staff selection considers the individual needs of each school.

D. DESIRED OUTCOMES

- 1. An educational program that emphasizes academic excellence.
- 2. A comprehensive program accessible to all students that allows students to meet graduation requirements and to explore interests through elective courses and extracurricular activities.
- 3. Programs, courses, activities, and learning experiences that prepare students to be successful in postsecondary education and the world of work.
- 4. Collaboration among students, staff, parents, and families to support and encourage academic achievement and the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth of students.
- 5. A culture that fosters intellectual development and a sense of belonging, and promotes citizenship, responsibility, and mutual respect among students.
- 6. Graduates equipped to gather and use information and collaborate with others to solve problems and make informed judgments on public and private concerns.

E. REVIEW AND REPORTING

This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the Board of Education policy review process.

Policy History: Adopted by Resolution No. 348-88, June 27, 1988; amended by Resolution No. 567-10, December 7, 2010.

Note. Prior to Resolution No. 348-88, this topic was governed by the following: High School Policy, adopted by Resolution No. 161-80, February 12, 1980; amended by Resolution No. 912b-83, November 8, 1983; reformatted in accordance with Resolution No. 333-86, June 12, 1986, and Resolution 458-86, August 12, 1986; rescinded by Resolution No. 348-88, June 27, 1988.