



Regulation IKA-RA, Grading and Reporting Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) School-Year 2025-2026

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PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

Q: Why is the grading and reporting regulation being revised?

A: MCPS is updating its secondary grading and reporting practices to:

- Align grades with demonstrated mastery of content standards
- Communicate student performance more clearly
- Promote student responsibility for learning and attendance
- Reduce inconsistencies in grading across schools

Q: Will these grading changes apply to all secondary students?

A: Yes. Beginning in the 2025-2026 school year, all students in grades 6-12 will follow the updated grading regulation.

Q: Are these changes retroactive?

A: No. These changes will apply starting with the 2025-2026 school year and will not affect previous years' grades.

Q: Where can I go to read the Regulation?

A: The Grading and Reporting Regulation is posted on the MCPS website. Click [HERE](#) to read the regulation.

GRADING CALCULATIONS

Q: How will final grades be calculated?

A: Final grades are based on the average of numeric marking period grades:

- **Semester courses:** The semester grade is calculated by averaging the two marking period grades. $(MP1 + MP2) \div 2 = \text{Semester Grade}$
- **Yearlong courses:** Add all four marking period grades and divide by 4 $(MP1 + MP2 + MP3 + MP4) \div 4 = \text{Yearlong Course Grade}$

Q: How will middle school health and physical education grades be calculated?

A: As in previous years, each quarter of middle school physical education is treated as a stand-alone course. Therefore, students receive a final grade at the end of each marking period. Courses are not averaged together for a final grade.

Q: How will missing grades be calculated?

A:

- **Missing Grades – Semester Courses:**
If one marking period grade is missing, the final grade will appear as **M (Missing)** unless the teacher overrides it with a final grade.
- **Missing Grades – Full-Year Courses:**
If one of the four marking period grades is missing, the final grade will be based on the average of the three available grades. $(MP1 + MP2 + MP3) \div 3 = \text{Final Grade}$

If more than one marking period grade is missing, the final grade will appear as M (Missing).

Q: Will both marking period and final grades appear on the report card?

A: Yes. Secondary report cards will show:

- Percentage and letter grades for each marking period
- Final letter grade for each semester or yearlong course (without percentage)

Q: Will final grades round up in Synergy?

A: Yes, Synergy defaults to rounding up when calculating final letter grades.

Q: If a student receives an NG (No Grade) for one marking period, how is the final grade calculated?

A: For year-long courses, the final grade is based on the remaining marking periods (e.g., divide by 3 instead of 4). For semester courses, the final grade may be marked Incomplete. This will be calculated as a Missing grade, with the expectation that the teacher submits a grade once finalized.

ASSIGNMENTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Q: What happens if a student does not turn in an assignment?

A: A "Z" is entered in the gradebook, signaling the work is missing but can still be submitted. If the student does not complete the assignment by the deadline after support is provided, the teacher will change the "Z" to a zero.

Q: Are there minimum grades for assessments?

A: Yes. The Regulation states that "Teachers shall not assign a grade lower than 50 percent if the student's work shows evidence of progress toward attaining the relevant standards that are being assessed." A zero will be given if the student makes no attempt to complete the assignment by the designated deadline. A zero may be assigned if the student engaged in academic dishonesty. (IKA-RA, pg. 11)

Q: How does a student show evidence of progress toward attaining the relevant standards that are being assessed?

A: Work must show a genuine attempt to meet the basic requirements and demonstrate progress toward the learning goal. This means the work must go beyond a blank submission or random answers. Student work should show that the student is engaging with the content and attempting to apply their learning.

Examples of a genuine attempt to meet the basic requirements and demonstrate progress toward the learning goal include:

- Answering most questions on an assignment with relevant effort and thought
- Writing a partial response that addresses the prompt and uses content vocabulary,

even if incomplete

- Showing steps in a math problem, even if the final answer is incorrect
- Submitting a draft with structure and ideas aligned to the task, even if it needs revision
- Attempting a lab, project, or performance task by following instructions and demonstrating key concepts

The goal is to capture whether the student is actively working toward the standard.

Q: Does the 50% Rule apply to all categories?

A: Yes. The 50% minimum applies to all categories (All Tasks and Practice/Preparation). In the Practice/Preparation category, teachers may grade for completion rather than accuracy, depending on the task.

Q: Who decides which tasks can be reassessed?

A: Teachers determine which assignments are eligible for reassessment and will designate those assignments with an R in the gradebook.

Q: Can a single low marking period grade cause a student to fail a semester?

A: Final semester grades are based on the average of the marking period grades. While a significantly low grade can impact the overall average, students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning across the semester. If a student does not pass a semester, credit recovery options are available to help them stay on track. In certain cases, high school students who fail only one marking period may be eligible for credit recovery with approval from the principal and the appropriate designee. These supports are in place to help students succeed and earn credit while addressing academic challenges in a timely manner. (See Credit Recovery, IKA-RA, pg. 15)

Q: What is the minimum number of assignments per marking period?

A: Each marking period must include:

- At least **9 All Tasks** assignments (e.g., tests, projects, essays)
- At least **5 Practice/Preparation** assignments (e.g., homework, in-class practice)

Q: Can work be made up after an absence, even if it's unexcused?

A: Yes. Students must be allowed to make up missed work regardless of the reason for the absence.

Q: What happens if a teacher does not grade an assignment within 10 school days?

A: The grading regulation sets the expectation that assignments will be graded within 10 school days to ensure students receive timely feedback that supports learning and progress. While we recognize there will be an initial adjustment period, MCPS remains committed to high standards of practice. If a grade is not entered within that window, teachers are expected to communicate proactively with students and families about the delay. In addition, each secondary school will establish clear communication channels to gather input from students and staff and ensure consistent implementation across classrooms.

DISTRICT ASSESSMENTS & TESTING

Q: What courses will have required districtwide summative assessments?

A: Districtwide summative assessments will be implemented for the following courses (both on-level and honors): ENG 6-8, ENG 9/ ENG 9 for EMLs, ENG 10/ ENG 10 for EMLs, ENG 11, ENG 12, Algebra 1 A/B, Algebra 2 A/B, Pre-Calculus A/B. Summative assessments will count for 10% of the MP 2 and MP 4 grade. Quarterly district assessments will continue to count for 10% of the MP grade.

Q: How are district assessments and End-of-Course (EOC) exams factored into grades?

A:

- **District summative assessments:** Count for up to 10% of the Marking Period 3 and Marking Period 4 grade
- **State-mandated EOC exams (Biology and Government):** Count for 20% of the Semester B final grade

Q: What is the difference between a quarterly district assessment and a semester summative assessment?

A: Quarterly district assessments are designed to measure student learning across a single marking period and may count for no more than 10% of the marking period grade.

Semester summative assessments occur at the end of the semester (marking periods 2 and 4) and measure learning across the entire semester. For the 2025–2026 school year, semester summative assessments will also be weighted 10% of the marking period grade.

SPECIAL POPULATIONS

Q: Are there changes for students pursuing Alternate Learning Outcomes (ALO)?

A: There are no changes to the regulation for students pursuing Alternate Learning Outcomes. All students are initially considered diploma-bound and are assessed and graded accordingly. If an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team determines that a student should be instructed, assessed, and graded based on Alternate Learning Outcomes aligned with the curriculum, the student will work toward a Certificate of Completion. This ensures that each student receives instruction and assessment tailored to their individual learning needs and goals.

Q: Do students with IEPs or 504 Plans receive extended deadlines?

A: Yes. Students with IEPs or 504 Plans who have extended time accommodations will receive adjusted due dates **and** deadlines in alignment with their individualized plans. Educators are expected to honor and implement all accommodations to support student success and equitable access to learning.

COMMUNICATION & OUTREACH

Q: Are teachers required to contact caregivers before assigning a zero or 50%?

A: While direct communication with caregivers is not required before assigning a zero or 50%, it is strongly encouraged as part of a supportive and collaborative approach to student learning. According to the Regulation, teachers are responsible for documenting communication with students and families about missing assignments, (IKA-RA,pg. 10)

In addition, before assigning a zero, teachers must document the support and/or interventions they make available to the student. (IKA-RA,pg. 11) These efforts may include:

- In-class or out-of-class support
- Reteaching and reassessment (when appropriate)
- Communication with the student, parent/guardian, or counselor



- If prior efforts are unsuccessful, communication with school administration

This process ensures that students are given every opportunity to engage with the learning and receive the support they need before a permanent grade is assigned.

Q: How will colleges and universities be informed of the changes?

A: MCPS transcripts will include a notation to explain the grading and reporting updates, ensuring transparency for college admissions and scholarship review processes. High school profiles will also include information explaining the shift in the grade calculation process.

DATA COLLECTION & IMPLEMENTATION

Q: How will MCPS monitor the implementation of the updated grading regulation?

A: MCPS will regularly review student data, including interim and report card grades, to identify trends and ensure consistent implementation. In addition, attendance and summative assessment data will be reviewed at the end of the second and fourth marking periods to monitor student engagement and learning outcomes.