1. Why does MCPS require body fat analyses to
determine minimum wrestling weights?
National federation and state rules have changed regarding
weight certification and weight management. MCPS is
responding to those changes to create more responsible,
safer, healthier weight management among wrestlers.

2. What are the main parts of the weight certification
process?
The wrestler’s current weight, age, hydration level, and
height will be used to calculate what the wrestler would
weigh if he achieved a 7% level of body fat (12% for
females). The lowest weight class that the wrestler may
certify/compete will correspond to what the wrestler would
weigh if a 7% level of body fat is achieved (12% for
females) while retaining proper hydration.

3. Where does the minimum body fat percent of 7% for
males and 12% for females come from?
These are the recommended minimums determined by the
National Federation of High Schools (NFHS) National
Medicine Advisory Committee. Research in sports medicine
observed these to be the lower limits among elite athletes
performing at peak efficiency. Negative physiological
changes have been reported below these levels.

4. Does a wrestler need to reduce to a 7% (12% for
females) level of body fat in order to be competitive?
Absolutely not. In fact, the large majority of wrestlers,
including the top wrestlers, will compete at weight classes
well above that which corresponds to a 7% level of body fat.
Remember, 7% is a minimum percentage, not a
recommended percentage.

5. Is this a new requirement?
No. MCPS began requiring all wrestlers to undergo body fat
analyses in 2003. It is a safer and more precise way to
determine a minimum weight class. Since the 2006–07
season, NFHS regulations require all wrestlers in the country
to have hydration tests and body fat assessments to determine
minimum weight classes.

6. Why is there a need for this process?
National studies have shown excessive weight loss and
"bouncing" (rapid weight loss followed by subsequent
gorging) among a significant number of wrestlers. Studies
show these practices to be harmful. Professional medical
organizations and national wrestling organizations strongly
endorse the process implemented by MCPS.

7. What potential harmful effects may result from
excessive weight loss?
Decreases in academic performance, athletic endurance,
and strength have been observed. Also, bodily functions,
including internal temperature control mechanisms, may be
compromised. An increased incidence and vulnerability to
eating disorders is another potential result.

8. How will a safe minimum weight class be
determined?
The current height, weight, hydration level, and level of
body fat is used to calculate what the wrestler would weigh
at a 7% level of body fat (12% for females). The
corresponding weight will be used to determine the lowest
weight class in which the wrestler may compete.

9. What is to stop wrestlers from crash-dieting and
reducing to their minimum weight class in one week?
Every public school team in the state must submit a Team
Weight Chart (TWC) prior to the 1st match. This chart is
programmed to determine a minimum weight class in
which a wrestler may compete for each week of the season.
The minimum weight class is programmed to reflect what
wrestlers will weigh if they reduced 1.5% of their weight
per week, which is considered a safe rate of weight loss.

10. What will MCPS use to measure a wrestler’s body fat?
The Tanita TBF-300W Body Fat Analyzer. This is a
reliable, valid instrument that is used to conduct similar
tests on wrestlers in many states to determine minimum
wrestling weight. The instrument is safe, non-invasive,
more precise than calipers, and consistent for all wrestlers.

11. Is the Tanita TBF-300W safe?
Although there are no known health risks from using the
Tanita scale, individuals using a pacemaker or internal
electrical medical devices should not use this product. The
weak electrical signal may cause such internal devices to
malfunction.

12. How does the Tanita TBF-300W work?
The instrument is similar in appearance to a bathroom
scale, with a keypad attached that allows variables to be
entered including height, gender, and age. The instrument
works on the principle of bioelectric impedance, which
involves sending a very small electric signal through the
body. When the individual steps on the scale, the feet are in
contact with two small pads. The signal begins at one pad, is
conducted through the water contained in the body, and ends
at the other pad. Lean muscle has much more water than fat tissue and allows the signal to pass easily. Fat contains significantly less water and causes impedance or resistance to the signal. The amount of time it takes to complete the circuit determines the percent of body fat. The slower the time, the higher the amount of body fat.

13. Who will conduct the tests?
Athletic trainers and professionals will conduct hydration tests and body fat analyses. A physician will be present to certify the minimum weight class for each wrestler, based on the result of the body fat analysis.

14. If body fat is the major criteria for certification, why is a physician’s signature still required?
The state athletic association, as well as the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR), require that a physician certify a wrestler’s lowest weight class. The Tanita TBF-300W provides objective data to be used by the physician to determine a safe minimum weight class.

15. Why is a hydration test necessary prior to the body fat analysis?
Bio impedance instruments, such as the Tanita TBF-300W, require that the individual be properly hydrated for a valid, reliable reading. An improper level of hydration will slow the speed of the signal, resulting in a flawed reading. The individual will show to have a higher level of body fat than he or she actually has. All wrestlers must “pass” a Urine Specific Gravity (hydration) test with a reading of 1.025 or lower immediately prior to having their body fat analyses. The urine will be analyzed exclusively for its level of hydration, and immediately discarded.

16. What if a wrestler is not properly hydrated?
If a wrestler is not properly hydrated, the wrestler will have to retake the test at another time.

17. Will what one eats or drinks affect the hydration test?
Certain items including caffeine and chocolate act as diuretics and could result in excess water loss or otherwise impede the electric signal used to measure the percent of one’s body fat. Information regarding hydration tips is available.

18. What is required from parents and wrestlers?
Wrestlers must arrive at the designated time/place with a signed parent permission form and student ID. Wrestlers should be properly hydrated, and should wear gym shorts and t-shirts.

19. What is the cost to wrestlers/parents for the body fat analysis/weight certification?
There is no cost to parents for wrestlers who certify at the MCPS sponsored weight certification location. However, parents must bear the expense for appeals or tests conducted at non-MCPS facilities.

20. Do other wrestlers in the state have to undergo a similar weight certification process?
Wrestlers at all Maryland public high schools must have a hydration test, body fat analyses and a physician’s signature to certify them for a minimum weight class. The weight certification form used by MCPS is similar for all Maryland public schools.

21. What if a wrestler’s calculated weight at a 7% level of body fat (12% for females) is between two weight classes?
The higher of the two weight classes will be designated, unless the calculated weight at 7% body fat (12% for females) is within 2% of the lower weight class. The attending physician may “round down” to the lower weight class if within 2%. If the attending physician does not consider it appropriate to “round down,” the wrestler may appeal this decision to his or her family physician. The family physician may certify the wrestler at the lower weight, but only if the wrestler’s projected weight at a 7% level of body fat is within 2% of a lower weight class.

22. Where can I get additional information?
The MCPS Athletics Website contains specific information regarding many details and aspects of the wrestling certification process. (www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/athletics). This information may also be obtained from the coach.

23. May a wrestler have a private, independent test to establish weight certification, instead of the test that MCPS will administer?
Yes, but the instrument used for the independent test will have to be the Dual Energy X-ray Absorptiometer (DEXA Scan) or the same instrument used by MCPS (Tanita TBF-300W). The individual must bear the costs of independent testing. Independent testing, appeals, and tests/weight certification for wrestlers after the MCPS certification dates are handled through Metro Orthopedics and Sports Therapy (MOST) 301-588-7888 x219. A 2% “rounding” allowance will not be allowed for certification at non-MCPS facilities. A computer-generated test result, including results of the hydration test, must be submitted.

24. Suppose a wrestler misses the MCPS sponsored weight certification or comes out late?
See numbers 23 and 25.

25. Is there an appeals process for an individual who does not agree with the MCPS assessment?
Yes, but the individual must bear whatever costs and make whatever arrangements are necessary. An individual may not appeal whether to allow greater than a 2% allowance that may qualify him for a lower weight class. However, an individual may appeal the results of the MCPS test. Appeals and late certifications are handled through Metro Orthopedic and Sports Therapy (MOST) 301-588-7888 X219. An individual may either be retested using the Tanita TBF-300W or using a DEXA Scan. There will not be any “allowance” or “rounding down” in an appeal of this nature, and the appeal must be completed and approved before the first match. Appropriate documentation of the test results must be provided.

26. Suppose a wrestler is naturally below the 7% minimum for males or the 12% minimum for females?
First, this is very rare. The wrestler’s physician must verify in writing that the wrestler is naturally under a 7% level of body fat. There would be no “rounding down”. The wrestler would certify for the weight class at or immediately above the natural weight.

27. How may one obtain information on a healthy, nutritious diet for a wrestler?
This information is available on the MCPS Athletics website (www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/athletics) and the MPSSAA website (www.MPSSAA.org). The nutrition plan described is adopted from the California High School Athletic Association nutrition education program for wrestlers.