



Pre-K to Graduation: A Policy Guide For Families

Attendance

Discipline

Grading and Promotion

Credit Recovery

Graduation

School Year 2019-2020



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear DCPS Families,

At DC Public Schools (DCPS), we know that our students excel when families, educators, school staff, and community members work together to support their success. We are committed to partnering with you to ensure that every student is loved, challenged, and prepared to take advantage of the growth and opportunity in our thriving city.

Pre-K to Graduation: A Policy Guide for Families aims to set clear expectations about the standards of excellence our students must meet, as well as what supports DCPS will provide along the way. This guide provides answers to frequently asked questions about topics including attendance, discipline, grading and promotion, credit recovery, and graduation. If you have questions about what qualifies as an excused absence, requirements for promotion and graduation, or how students can recover credits, you can find them and more in this guide.

I encourage you to discuss this information with your student so that they understand the steps that they need to take to succeed and the supports their school will provide along the way. Our educators and school staff are eager to work with you to support your student's success. Together, we can ensure that every student is prepared for college, career, and life.

In partnership,

Lewis D. Ferebee
Chancellor
DC Public Schools

Attendance

Overview

At DCPS, we want every student to feel loved, challenged, and prepared to positively influence society and thrive in life. To get there, every class and every day counts. Strong attendance is critical for success in academics and in life. At every DCPS school, attendance is taken for every student, every day. It is important that:

- Students arrive to school and class on time.
- Students bring all required materials to class.
- If absent, students and families bring a note explaining the absence to the school and receive make-up assignments.

Reach out to your child's teacher or school staff for help if there are challenges that are preventing your child from coming to school (e.g., safety or lack of transportation).

My child missed school. What types of absences are considered “excused” and how do I notify the school?

Any absence, including an absence from any portion of the school day, without a valid excuse is marked as an unexcused absence. The following absences may be classified as an **excused absence**:

- Illness of the student (a doctor's note is required for a student absent five or more cumulative days in a term);
- Illness of a child, for parenting students (a doctor's note for the student's child is required when the student is absent five or more cumulative days in a term);
- Medical or dental appointments for the student;
- Death in the student's immediate family;
- Exclusion by direction of the authorities of the District of Columbia, due to quarantine, contagious disease, infection, infestation, or other condition requiring separation from other students for medical or health reasons;
- Necessity for a student to attend a judicial or administrative proceeding, or court-ordered activity, as a party to the action or under subpoena;
- Observance of a religious holiday;
- Religious event celebration outside of a religious holiday (up to five cumulative days);
- Absences to allow students to visit their parent/guardian who is in the military, immediately before, during, or after deployment;
- College visits for students in grades 9-12 (up to three cumulative days);
- School visits for students in kindergarten through 8th grade (one day);
- Absences of expectant or parenting students for a time period specified by their doctor and any accommodations mandated by law;
- Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day; and
- An emergency or other circumstance approved by DCPS.

A **written note must be provided to the school by the student's parent/guardian within five (5) school days** after the student's return to school for an absence to be excused. Upon receipt of appropriate documentation within five (5) school days, school staff must update absences as excused.

The student's parent/guardian may write their own note or fill in the DCPS template excuse note form, which is provided at the end of this document. The explanation must include:

- Student's name
- Parent's/guardian's name
- Parent's/guardian's contact information
- Date of the excuse note
- Date(s) of the absence
- Reason for student's absence

For additional clarification on submitted excuse notes, please contact your child's school.

If a student is absent:

- For a total of up to **four (4) cumulative days in each term**, a parent's/guardian's written excuse is sufficient for explaining the absence. The absence will be excused if it falls under one of the excused absence reasons noted above;
- For **five (5) or more cumulative days per term**, further documentation is required to excuse the absence. Written explanation of the student's absence must be submitted by a doctor or staff of a relevant agency, on official office/agency letterhead and signed by a relevant official. Note:
 - Medical or dental absences must be submitted on official doctor/dentist office stationery or form.
 - Student's required presence at judicial or administrative proceedings must be documented by a document from the court or administrative hearing office stating the need for the student's presence on all the relevant dates.
 - Funeral programs may be accepted as appropriate documentation to excuse absences due to a death in the student's immediate family.

My child will be out of the school building for a DCPS-sponsored activity or athletic event. Is that considered excused?

Yes. Students participating in DCPS-sponsored events, field trips, or study abroad travel during the regular school day are considered present. Students participating in DCPS-sponsored athletic events during regular school class hours are considered present. It is important to note that to participate in any athletic tryout, practice, game or match, a student must be present in school on the day of that event unless the student has an excused absence.

My child has a non-DCPS educational event on a school day. Is that considered excused?

Generally, absences not listed above, including extended travel, are considered unexcused. If a student or parent/guardian anticipates an absence not covered by the excused absences listed above, they may submit a request for an excused absence due to a special circumstance to their school principal. The principal will consult with their Instructional Superintendent before determining whether to grant the excused absence request.

What happens if my child has multiple unexcused absences?

School-aged students (see definition below) who have multiple **unexcused absences** within a school year will receive the following notifications from DCPS, the school, and/or the student's teacher.

- **1 Day of Unexcused Absence:** Parents/guardians will be contacted when a student has one unexcused absence.
- **3 Days of Unexcused Absences:** Parents/guardians will receive an unexcused absence letter.
- **5 Days of Unexcused Absences:** Parents/guardians will receive an unexcused absence letter. In addition, if the five unexcused absences have occurred within one term, the student will be referred to school staff who support attendance interventions, the Attendance Student Support Team.
- **7 Days of Unexcused Absences:** Parents/guardians will receive a Metropolitan Police Department warning letter.
- **10 Unexcused Absences (Student is considered chronically truant):**
 - For students aged 5 - 13, DCPS will contact Child Family Services (CFSA).
 - For students aged 14 and over, DCPS will refer the student for follow-up Attendance Student Support Team interventions.
 - See Grading and Promotion section for warning policies related to coursework and attendance.
- **15 Unexcused Absences:**
 - For students aged 14 - 17, DCPS will refer the student to Court Social Services Division.
 - See Grading and Promotion section for warning policies related to coursework and attendance.
- **20 Consecutive Unexcused Absences:** The student is eligible for withdrawal. (See next question regarding eligibility for withdrawal.)
- **More than 30 Unexcused Absences:** Secondary students will receive a failing grade. (See Grading and Promotion section for related information regarding course failure due to absence for secondary students, including how to file an appeal.)

**Note: All children who reach five (5) years of age on or before September 30 of the current school year are considered school-aged and must attend school on time every day until they meet high school graduation requirements or reach their 18th birthday.*

What will occur if my child misses more than 20 days consecutively?

If a student registered in school is absent 20 days in a row without an excuse, they may be withdrawn due to non-attendance. This applies to all students in Pre-K through 12th grade regardless of whether they are in-boundary or out-of-boundary. Students can return to their neighborhood school to re-enroll but are subject to the waitlist if they are attempting to re-enroll in an out-of-boundary school.

What is the potential impact of unexcused absences on my child's grades and promotion to the next grade?

Please see the Grading and Promotion section.

What if my child has a serious medical condition and cannot attend school full time?

The DCPS Home and Hospital Instruction Program (HHIP) offers an individualized, blended-learning instructional model to students who are medically confined for two weeks or more. HHIP meets the academic and related-service needs of students with health impairments by incorporating Common Core State Standards, as well as the DCPS Scope and Sequence. The HHIP team engages the student, parents/guardians, medical professionals, and school-based team with the goal of successfully transitioning the student back to their school of enrollment or appropriate school-based setting.

My child is in Pre-K and is not of compulsory school age. What is important to know about attendance?

All children who reach five (5) years of age on or before September 30 of the current school year are considered school-aged and must attend school on time every day until they meet high school graduation requirements or reach their 18th birthday. Although Pre-K3 and Pre-K4 are non-compulsory grades, DCPS strongly believes that regular attendance is critical for students of all ages from Pre-K3 – 12th grade. Pre-K students are subject to the same requirements regarding excused and unexcused absences.

- **1 Day of Unexcused Absence:** Parents/guardians will be contacted when a student has one day of unexcused absence.
- **3 Days of Unexcused Absences:** Parents/guardians will receive an unexcused absence letter.
- **5 Days of Unexcused Absences:** Parents/guardians will receive an unexcused absence letter. In addition, if the five unexcused absences have occurred within one term, the student will be referred to school staff who support attendance interventions, the Attendance Student Support Team. A referral may also be made to the Early Childhood Education Family Service Team.
- **20 Consecutive Unexcused Absences:** If a registered student is absent 20 days in a row without an excuse, they may be withdrawn due to non-attendance and subject to a waitlist to reenroll, even if the student is in-boundary.

If my child is late to class in grades 6-12, when are they considered tardy?

Arriving to class on time is important. A secondary student (grades 6-12) will be marked as tardy if they arrive in class five (5) or more minutes after the official start of the period. Students will be allowed to enter their scheduled course regardless of what time they arrive. Teachers should make every effort to make late arriving students feel welcomed. There is no point in a class period that a tardy will convert to an absence. If a student attends a portion of the class, they will be considered present and tardy. Multiple instances of a student being tardy may not be accumulated to count as an absence. Responses to student tardiness should be appropriate and logical. A student should never receive an out of school suspension due to being tardy.

Note: There is not a DCPS tardy policy for elementary students; for more information on the tardy policy at your child's school, please reach out to their school.

Where can I learn more about the attendance policy?

For additional information about DCPS's attendance practices, processes, and policies, please contact your child's school. You can also find information on DCPS's website at <https://dcps.dc.gov/attendance> or the Every Day Counts! Taskforce website at <https://attendance.dc.gov/>.

Discipline

Overview

DCPS strives to create an environment where every student is given the opportunities and supports that they need to thrive. As a part of this commitment, DCPS works to create a learning environment that supports the whole child and ensures that every student has access to joyful and rigorous academic experiences. We support the development of social emotional competencies to enhance success in school.

My school notified me that my child was removed from class and suspended due to their behavior. What does that mean?

A student's behavior may necessitate removing the student from their class(es) for a limited amount of time. A suspension is defined as the removal of a student from their regularly-scheduled academic program due to a disciplinary infraction. Students may be assigned to suspension in-school or out-of-school depending on the behavior. Once a student has served the suspension, the student can return to class. DCPS cannot require parents/guardians to attend a conference before a student may return from a suspension.

In-School Suspension

A student may be removed from the classroom to another location in their school. In-school suspensions can vary in length from one (1) to three (3) days in grades K-5 and one (1) to five (5) days in grades 6-12. For any students serving an in-school suspension, school staff will:

- Document the suspension in the official DCPS system of record (Student Behavior Tracker),
- Provide academic materials for students to complete while on suspension, and
- Ensure the student can make up quizzes, special projects, or finals upon return to the classroom.

Out-of-School Suspensions

Students may receive an out-of-school suspension from one (1) to five (5) days in grades K-5, and one (1) to ten (10) days in grades 6-12. When serving an out-of-school suspension the student may not:

- Enter the school building or be on school property, or
- Engage in school-sponsored events or extracurricular activities.

For any student serving an out-of-school suspension, school staff will:

- Document the suspension in the official DCPS system of record (Student Behavior Tracker),
- Record the student's absence from class for out-of-school suspension as excused,
- Provide academic materials for students to complete while on suspension, and
- Ensure the student can make up quizzes, special projects, or finals upon return to school.

Are there limits to when my child in K-5 may receive an out-of-school suspension?

Yes. Beginning in the 2019-20 school year, students in grades K-5 cannot receive an out-of-school suspension unless the student has willfully caused, attempted to cause, or threatened to cause bodily injury or emotional distress to another person, including behavior that happens off school grounds.

Are there limits to the number of out-of-school suspension days my child can receive?

Yes. There are restrictions on the number of consecutive and cumulative days that students can receive for out-of-school suspension in alignment with the Student Fair Access to School Amendment Act of 2018.

- Students in grades K-5 cannot receive an out-of-school suspension for a single discipline incident that exceeds five (5) consecutive days.*
- Students in grades 6-12 cannot receive an out-of-school suspension for a single discipline incident that exceeds ten (10) consecutive days.*
- Students in grades K-12 cannot receive more than twenty (20) cumulative days of out-of-school suspension, unless the Chancellor provides a written justification to the student and parent/guardian describing why exceeding the 20-day limit is a more appropriate disciplinary action than alternative responses; or the student's conduct necessitated an emergency removal, and the Chancellor provides a written justification for the emergency removal to the student and parent/guardian.*

**Note: The exception to the above requirements is if a student violates the Gun-Free Schools Act. This federal law requires all schools to expel a student, who is determined to have brought a firearm to a school, or to have possessed a firearm at a school, from attending school for a period of not less than one year. The Chancellor can modify the expulsion requirement.*

What are my child's rights in the suspension process?

Under the law, you and your child have the right to **due process**. This means that you have the right to learn about the reasons for the proposed removal and, in the case of a suspension of six (6) days or more, to have information related to the reasons for the proposed removal reviewed by an independent third party. Students with qualifying disabilities have additional due process rights, as outlined below.

Due Process Rights for Students in General Education:

Below are the steps that must be followed for a student to be formally suspended in DCPS. When a student receives a suspension, schools must:

- **Provide the student with an opportunity to have an administrative conference:** A principal or their designee must hold a conference with the student before imposing a suspension, except when an emergency situation exists (see below), in which case the conference will be held no more than three (3) school days after the suspension is initiated.
- **Review the incident and decide on the appropriate disciplinary response.**
- **Document all information related to the suspension.**
- **Send notification of proposed disciplinary action to the parent/guardian:** Parents/guardians can be contacted by phone to notify them of a proposed suspension. Within 24 hours of any suspension, written notification must be sent by certified mail or hand delivered to a parent/guardian. Written notification must be provided in the form of an official DCPS suspension notification letter.
- **Create an educational plan:** For suspensions of more than two (2) days, students are entitled to an educational plan and work packet that is aligned to the instruction that they will miss during the suspension.
- **Hearings:** A student who has been suspended for six (6) days or more or who has been expelled is entitled to have a disciplinary hearing held by an independent hearing officer.

Emergency Condition Suspensions

A student may be removed immediately from their normal instructional day, prior to all aspects of "due process" being completed, if they are contributing to an emergency situation in the school. For an emergency removal of a general education student, the school must prove that the student creates a serious threat to the school community. For a student with (or who is being evaluated for) an IEP or a 504 Plan, the student's behavior must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- The student carries a weapon to school or to a school function;

- The student knowingly possesses or uses illegal drugs or solicits the sale of a controlled substance while at school or at a school function; or
- The student has inflicted serious bodily injury upon another person while at school, on school premises, or at a school function under the jurisdiction of DCPS.

Due Process Rights for Students with Disabilities who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan

DCPS staff, a parent/guardian, and relevant members of the child's IEP team should review all relevant information in the student's file, including the child's IEP, any teacher observations, and any relevant information provided by the parents/guardians to determine if the conduct in question was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the child's disability; or if the conduct in question was the direct result of DCPS's failure to implement the IEP. If a decision is made that there is a deficiency in service, DCPS will take immediate steps to remedy those deficiencies. For more information on procedural safeguards in place for students with disabilities, please see <https://dcps.dc.gov/specialeducation>.

How do suspensions affect attendance?

Students who are fulfilling in-school suspensions are considered present in school. Out-of-school suspensions are excused absences; parents/guardians do not need to turn in documentation for absences due to out-of-school suspensions.

I have concerns about my child's suspension. Where can I find out more information and how can I appeal a suspension for my child?

The policies for DCPS discipline are based on both the Student Fair Access to School Amendment Act of 2018 and DC Municipal Regulations under Chapter 25. Parents/guardians have the right to appeal any suspension. During the appeal, the student and/or parent/guardian may present evidence and ask witnesses to speak. Appeal requests can be made orally or in writing.

- For suspensions of one (1) to three (3) days for students in grades K-5, or one (1) to five (5) days for students in grades 6-12, the appeal is heard by the principal and must be made within two (2) days of receiving notification of the suspension.
- For suspensions of four (4) to five (5) days for students in grades K-5, the appeal is heard by the Instructional Superintendent.
- For suspensions of six (6) to ten (10) days for students in grades 6-12, parents/guardians are initially entitled to a hearing before an independent hearing officer. If a parent/guardian wishes to appeal a suspension that is imposed following a hearing, the appeal is heard by a designee of the Chancellor and must be made by the parent/guardian within five (5) days of receiving notification of the final suspension decision.

To find out who your child's Instructional Superintendent is, please see <https://dcps.dc.gov/page/instructional-superintendents>.

In all cases, if a student and/or parent/guardian has concerns, they may contact the Office of Integrity which supports all DCPS stakeholders in ensuring a speedy resolution process in promoting fair and equitable practices for students and families. In addition to the above written processes, it is important to note that concerns can be made over the phone to the Office of Integrity. Please reach out to (202) 939-4913 or DCPS.cio@k12.dc.gov for support.

Grading and Promotion

Overview

Grades and progress reports are critical ways for educators to provide feedback to students and families on academic progress and for students to understand the steps that they need to take to be successful. DCPS is committed to providing all students and their families with consistent feedback to inform their progress on the path to graduation.

What does my child in grades Pre-K through 8 need to do in order to be promoted to the next grade level?

Promotion and retention decisions for students in grades Pre-K through 8 are made by your child's principal and must consider the following requirements:

- **All students** must have **no more than 30 unexcused absences** within the full school year to be promoted to the next grade level.
- **Pre-K:** Student progress is measured using the GOLD[®] assessment system which measures student growth across the following developmental domains: math, literacy, cognitive, social/emotional, language, and physical development. Additional information is available from your child's teacher.
- **Kindergarten through Grade 5:** Students must receive proficient or advanced marks (2, 3, or 4) in core subjects of reading/English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Additional information is available from your child's teacher.
- **Grades 6 through 8:** Students must pass all core classes (English, math, science, and social studies) with a "D" or above.

What does my high school child need to do in order to be promoted to the next course or grade level?

Grades 9 through 11: Students must meet the following promotion requirements set forth in DC Municipal Regulations related to credit accumulation required for each grade:

- Promotion to 10th grade: Any student earning six (6) credits, including 9th grade English, is eligible to be promoted to 10th grade.
- Promotion to 11th grade: Any student earning twelve (12) credits, including 10th grade English and Algebra I, is eligible to be promoted to 11th grade.
- Promotion to 12th grade: Any student earning eighteen (18) credits, including 11th grade English, is eligible to be promoted to 12th grade.

If my child does not meet the promotion criteria, are they required to attend summer school?

Yes, students who are not promoted to the next grade level because they did not meet the promotion criteria and/or they accumulated more than 30 unexcused absences may be required to attend summer school. In this event, parents/guardians and students will be notified by their school and provided summer school registration information. DCPS also offers optional summer enrichment programming. To learn more about required summer school and optional summer enrichment programs, please visit <https://dcps.dc.gov/summer>.

How will I learn about my child's academic progress?

Parents/guardians and students will be informed in writing on a regular basis of the student's progress through mid-term progress reports, report cards, parent/guardian conferences, and other notifications. Students with failing grades must be provided support through instructional support planning and referral to the Student Support Team.

Families must be informed no later than twelve (12) school days after the close of the third marking period of a student's progress toward promotion or graduation each school year in writing. If students are at risk of not being promoted or graduating, DCPS will work closely with families to ensure the student gets back on track. Parents/guardians of students in grades 6-12 can access information on student grades and attendance through the Parent Portal in Aspen. Additional information is available at <https://dcps.dc.gov/page/parent-portal>.

Parents have access to assignments, graded and ungraded (if Aspen gradebook is used).

AssignmentName	DateApp	DateDue	Score	15.0 / 20.0	(15)	Assignment feedback
Homework 1	1/22/2018	1/29/2018	80%	15.0 / 20.0	(15)	
Participation 1	1/22/2018	1/29/2018	80%	15.0 / 18.0	(18)	
Practice & Application 1	1/22/2018	1/29/2018	75%	15.0 / 20.0	(15)	
Extra Credit: Participation Term 3 Grade 6	1/22/2018	3/5/2018	Ungraded			
Extra Credit: Term 3 Assessment 6	1/22/2018	3/5/2018	Ungraded			

Parents have access to detailed information for each assignment.

Can my child make up missed work in grades 6-12?

Teachers will provide students with an opportunity to make up work in the case that a student is absent from class. Teachers must provide written communication to students at the beginning of the course regarding the school-wide makeup work policy. Each school shall specify a reasonable period of time for completion of makeup work, which shall be no less than one full calendar day for each day missed. Teachers should follow standard grading procedures when grading makeup work.

How do unexcused absences impact my child's course grade if they are in grades 6-12?

Course attendance is critical to mastering course material. All secondary students will receive marks of A through F to indicate the degree of achievement by a course's standards. If a student has **more than 30 unexcused absences** in a course, they will receive an F for the course. If a student accumulates 10 unexcused absences, the school will send a warning letter to the student's family. If the student accumulates 15 unexcused absences, another letter will be sent home. If your student is struggling with daily or course attendance, please reach out to your student's teacher or school staff for additional information on supports.

What is the appeals process if I have concerns about my child's grades and/or the decision to retain?

If a parent/guardian and/or student has concerns about grades and/or the decision to retain, they can appeal. Appeals can be made in writing and an example appeal form is provided at the end of this guide.

- Grade Appeals:** A parent/guardian or student has the right to seek to appeal educational records that they believe are inaccurate or misleading. A parent/guardian or student can initiate a request for an appeal in any written format. An initial grade appeal in writing should be sent to the school principal within ten (10) school days of receipt of the grade. The principal will review the appeal and issue a decision in writing. A parent/guardian or student may appeal the principal's decision by submitting a written appeal to the Instructional Superintendent within five (5) school days of receipt of the principal's decision.

- **Failure Due to Absence Appeals:** A secondary student or parent/guardian with concerns regarding failing a course due to more than 30 unexcused absences can appeal in writing to the school principal within ten (10) school days of receipt of the failing grade. An Appeals Panel will review the appeal and issue a decision. If the appeal is denied, the student or parent/guardian may appeal the decision of the Appeals Panel by writing to FAGrade.CentralAppeal@dc.gov within ten (10) school days after the receipt of the decision.
- **Retention Appeals:** A parent/guardian or student has the right to appeal a retention decision. A parent/guardian or student can initiate a request for an appeal in any written format to the Instructional Superintendent. The Instructional Superintendent will review the appeal and issue a decision in writing.

To find out who your child's Instructional Superintendent is, please see <https://dcps.dc.gov/page/instructional-superintendents>.

In all cases, if a student and/or parent/guardian has concerns, they may contact the Office of Integrity which supports all DCPS stakeholders in ensuring a speedy resolution process in promoting fair and equitable practices for students and families. In addition to the above written processes, it is important to note that concerns can be made over the phone to the Office of Integrity. Please reach out to (202) 939-4913 or DCPS.cio@k12.dc.gov for support.

High School Credit Recovery

Overview

The primary focus of credit recovery is to help students stay engaged, master course content, and graduate ready for college and career. Students in credit recovery programming participate in rigorous, individualized, competency-based courses that are aligned to DCPS curriculum standards. These courses enable students to reengage with content that they did not master in their original class.

Is my child eligible to participate in credit recovery?

Only high school students who have taken and failed the original course are eligible for credit recovery. Students may not take a credit recovery course concurrently or in place of an original credit course. Students will have the support of their guidance counselor in enrolling in credit recovery. Parents/guardians must be notified of their child's participation in credit recovery. If your student needs to enroll in credit recovery in order to earn credit for a previously failed course, discuss your student's options with a guidance counselor.

Where can my child enroll in credit recovery?

Anacostia, Ballou, Cardozo, Coolidge, Columbia Heights Education Campus, Dunbar, Eastern, Phelps, Roosevelt, Ron Brown, Wilson, and H.D. Woodson high schools offer credit recovery courses. Students can enroll in their home school or cross-enroll in another school to participate in credit recovery.

What are the attendance requirements for my child's credit recovery course?

Because courses take place outside of traditional school hours, teachers and students set an attendance plan where a student attends in-person classes either three, four, or five days per week. In addition to the in-person attendance, students have expectations of homework and online coursework. If students are absent without a valid excuse for 18 or more of the in-person class sessions, they will be withdrawn from the course and receive a grade of "W."

What grades will indicate that my child successfully completed a credit recovery course?

Students who attain a course grade of "D" or above will have successfully passed the credit recovery course and earned course credit. Students will receive a mark of "W" if they accrue 18 unexcused absence or do not earn a "D" or above in the course. Credit recovery course grades do not replace original credit course grades on a student's transcript. All grades are marked on a student's transcript and factored into the student's grade point average.

High School Graduation

Overview

DCPS is committed to ensuring that all students are prepared to achieve in college, career, and life. Creating clear standards that students must meet to graduate and ensuring that stakeholders are held accountable is a key element of making certain that students are set up for success. DCPS is committed to:

- Maintaining high expectations for all students and ensuring all graduates feel confident they have earned their diplomas;
- Empowering our students and families on their paths to graduation with the supports they need to be successful; and
- Providing clear and transparent policies with rigorous monitoring systems.

What are the DCPS graduation requirements?

To receive a DCPS diploma, all students must earn 24.0 credits and complete 100 hours of community service.

Subject	Credits (Carnegie Units)
English	4.0 credits
Mathematics (including Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II)	4.0 credits
Science (must include three lab sciences)	4.0 credits
Social Studies (must include World History 1 and 2, United States History; United States Government, and District of Columbia History)	4.0 credits
World Language	2.0 credits
Art	0.5 credits
Music	0.5 credits
Health and Physical Education	1.5 credits
Electives	3.5 credits
Total	24.0 credits

- One (1) of the three (3) lab science units shall be a course in Biology.
- At least two (2.0) of the twenty-four (24.0) Carnegie Units for graduation must include a College Level or Career Preparatory (CLCP) course, such as an Advanced Placement or career and technical education course. Students and parents/guardians should reach out to their school counselor for a full list of offerings at their school.
- All students must enroll in Algebra I no later than 10th grade.
- Students qualifying for the evening program high school diploma are not required to take the 1.5 credits in Health and Physical Education.
- All students must complete 100 hours of community service to receive a high school diploma.

Note: Students enrolled in Specialized High Schools or schools with special programs (e.g. Eastern International Baccalaureate Program) may have graduation requirements that exceed the DCPS 24 credits.

Certificate of IEP Completion

Students with disabilities who have mastered their IEP goals, completed high school coursework, but have not completed the requirements for a Standard High School Diploma can earn a Certificate of IEP Completion. Additional details are available on <https://dcps.dc.gov/specialeducation>.

How are transfer credits evaluated?

If a student has earned high school credits from a school not in DCPS – including DC charter schools, schools in another state, embassy schools, home school, and schools outside the US – DCPS must evaluate the student’s transcript to determine which credits can be applied towards a DCPS diploma. DCPS will only review and evaluate official transcripts and may not accept all credits. DCPS must determine whether each credit was earned at a school that is accredited, recognized by the state in which it is located, or meets another criterion acceptable to DCPS.

How are Grade Point Averages (GPAs) calculated for my child?

A Grade Point Average (GPA) is a calculated average of the letter grades earned in all qualified classes. All GPAs and ranks for high school courses are calculated through a centralized procedure using the district’s student information system to ensure that GPAs are tabulated in a consistent, accurate, and equitable manner for all students at all DCPS high schools. DCPS maintains the following three types of GPAs:

- **Cumulative GPA:** Includes final marks for all courses taken in high school. Results are saved on student transcripts and used for class ranking.
- **Term Grade Average:** Includes only current term marks, including marks for courses that students are still taking. Results are not saved on student transcripts but do appear on the report card. Results are used for honor roll purposes.
- **Year Grade Average:** Includes only final marks earned in the span of one academic year. In terms 1-3, this value may change greatly depending on the student and school schedule. Results are updated each term on the report card.

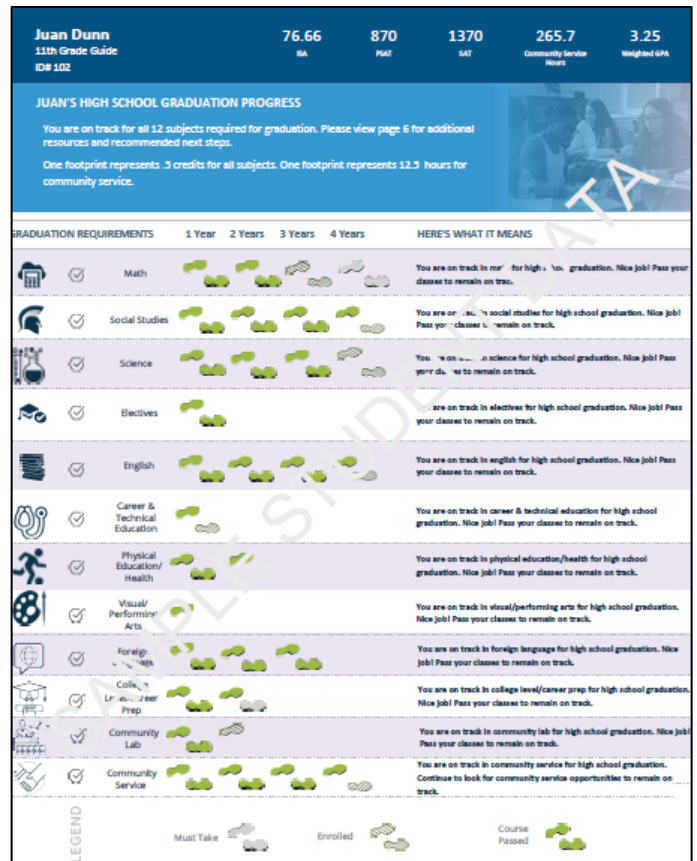
The cumulative GPA, term grade average, and year grade average of all students enrolled in a DCPS school include all marks earned, including F. If a student retook a course, those grades do not replace previously earned grades and are included in a student’s cumulative GPA. Grades earned in extended education programs such as Summer School, STAY school, and evening credit recovery courses have the same credit and GPA value as standard year courses.

Where can my child complete their community service hours?

The 100 hour requirement of community service must be non-paying voluntary service for the benefit of the community and may be completed at a nonprofit organization [501(c)(3)], schools, federal or local agencies, or other organizations. The service cannot be performed during the hours the student is required to be in class. If the activity is performed at a school, the community service must be part of a structured and supervised activity. The service cannot be of a political nature. Students may begin accruing community service hours at the start of 8th grade with approval from the school. Students may accrue a maximum of 25 hours prior to 9th grade.

How will I know if my child is on track for graduation, college, and career?

Students and families in grades 9 through 12 will receive an individualized DCPS Guide to Graduation, College, and Career every year, based on student-specific data and inputs. The guide provides an overview of each student’s progress toward graduation, as well as important information regarding college and career opportunities and action steps. The guide is meant to provide a transparent update on student progress and to help students and families, in collaboration with their school, create a roadmap to success in high school and beyond.



Absence Excuse Note

Please excuse my child, _____ (NAME)

My child missed school on _____ (DATE(S) OF ABSENCE)
due to the reason checked below:

Please select the reason why your child missed school (required):

- Student illness** (For five or more absences per term, a doctor's note is required.)
- Medical/dental appointment** (For five or more absences per term, a doctor/dentist note is required.)
- Student judicial proceeding** (Please provide document from court verifying presence.)
- Religious holiday/event** (Please list the holiday/event below.)
- Death in the immediate family**
- Other** (If you selected "other," please provide details. Please understand that under DCPS policy, only certain absences may be accepted as excused absences.)

If a student is absent for five or more cumulative days per term for any reason, additional documentation is required beyond a note from the parent/guardian for the absence to be excused.

Parent/Guardian Name (Please Print) _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Parent/Guardian Phone Number: _____

Today's Date*: _____

***Please be aware that DC law states that excuse notes written by parents/guardians must be turned into school staff within five (5) days following a student's return from an absence for the absence to be excused.**

Note: This is a sample form. Parents/guardians may use other written forms for an absence excuse note.

Appeal Form

Date: _____

Student Name: _____

Student ID: _____

School: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Contact Information: _____

Reason for Appeal:

- Attendance Records
- Grades or Marks, Including Failure Due to Absence
- Discipline
- Retention or Promotion Decision

Please provide information regarding your appeal.

Attach additional information, if necessary.

Note: This is a sample form. Parents/guardians may use other written forms for their child’s appeal or call the Office of Integrity for support over the phone (202) 939-4913.

Date received by school and name of staff member: _____