



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2018 Secondary School Attendance, Grading, and Credit Recovery FAQ For Families

Spring 2018 – Revised as of April 13, 2018

Overview

At DC Public Schools (DCPS), we are committed to improving communications with families regarding our current policies that impact students and parents. For Spring 2018, DCPS is fully implementing policies around grading, attendance, and credit recovery. This frequently asked questions (FAQ) document strives to answer your questions regarding our current attendance policy, grading policy, and our pathways to credit recovery for School Year 2017-2018. For more information or questions, please contact your school principal.

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Graduation Requirements

1. What does a DCPS student need to receive a DCPS high school diploma?

To receive a diploma in DC, students who enroll in 9th grade for the first time in School Year 2007-2008 and thereafter must earn 24.0 credits (or Carnegie Units, which is 120 seat hours per credit) as follows: *Compiled from District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR) 5-A DCMR § 2203 (as of April 8, 2016)*

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) of the twenty-four (24) 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 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 tenth (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.

Attendance

1. What is DCPS' expectation for daily attendance?

At DCPS, we want every student to feel loved, challenged, and prepared to positively influence society and thrive in life. To get there, every student needs to be in school every day because **every day counts**. At each school, attendance is taken for every student, every day. Teachers are expected to take attendance within the first 10 minutes of class and update attendance for tardy students at the conclusion of each class period.

Every school day, students should:

- a) **Arrive on time** to school and to class.
- b) **Bring your books** and materials to class.
- c) **Ask your teacher for missed work** or make-up assignments for days you were absent.

Ask school staff for help if you have academic or other concerns (*e.g.*, safety or lack of transportation) preventing you from coming to school.

2. What is an excused absence?

Any absence, including an absence from any portion of the school day, without a valid excuse shall be marked as an unexcused absence.

The following are valid excuses for an absence:

- Illness of the student or a bona fide medical reason (a doctor's note is required if a student is absent for five or more consecutive days);
- Medical or dental appointment for the student;
- Death in the student's immediate family;
- Exclusion due to quarantine, contagious disease, etc.;
- Necessity for a student to attend a judicial proceeding as a plaintiff, defendant, witness, or juror;
- Observance of a religious holiday;
- Visiting a parent/guardian who is deployed on military duty (before, during, or after deployment. Documentation may be required);
- Lawful exclusion or expulsion by school authorities;
- Temporary facility closings due to weather, unsafe conditions, or other emergencies;
- Failure of DC to provide transportation where legally responsible;
- Emergency or circumstances approved by a central office attendance specialist;
- College visits (up to one (1) day for students in grades K-8 and up to three (3) days for 9th through 12th grade students).

If you have questions or concerns regarding your student's attendance or would like to request clarification on the excused absence policy, please contact your school principal or attendance point of contact.

3. What information must be included in documentation for an excused absence?

Parent/guardians must submit a written explanation (either their own note or fill in the DCPS template excuse note form, which is provided at the end of this document) to their school's attendance point of contact. The explanation must include:

- The student's name
- Parent/guardian's name
- Parent/guardian's contact information
- Date of the excuse note
- Date(s) of the absence from which the student is returning
- Reason for student's absence

If a student is absent for a total of up to **four (4) days** in each grading period, a parent/guardian's written excuse is sufficient for explaining the absence. Such absence will be excused if it falls under an allowable absence reason noted above.

If a student is absent for **five (5) or more consecutive days**, further documentation is required beyond communication by the parent for the absence to be excused. Written explanation of the student's absence must be submitted by a doctor or staff of relevant agency, on official doctor's 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; and
- Student's required presence at judicial proceedings must be documented by a document from the court stating the need for the student's presence on all of the relevant dates.

4. Can non-DCPS sponsored educational trips count as an excused absence?

Generally, absences caused by extended travel, whether international or domestic, that are not directly related to one of the reasons listed above are considered unexcused. However, parents/guardians of students who are attending extracurricular activities that do not exceed five (5) school days may request permission to have the absences excused.

At least **ten (10) days** prior to the trip, a parent/guardian **must submit a written request** to their school principal along with relevant documentation. Determination of whether the absence will be excused will be made on a case-by-case basis and is conditional upon the student's completion of provided schoolwork packets.

5. How are students with disabilities on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) impacted by the attendance policy?

The attendance protocol is the same for all students of compulsory age, including students who have an IEP. If a student is not present in a class for reasons related to fulfilling requirements in her/his IEP, it is considered excused.

6. How do suspensions affect attendance?

Suspensions are excused absences. Suspensions must be administered according to the student discipline rules contained Chapter 25 of Title 5-B in the D.C. Municipal Regulations (“Chapter 25”) and approved by an authorized official, which is usually the principal and/or instructional superintendent. Students must be allowed to attend school until a suspension is properly approved according to the requirements in Chapter 25. However, please note that a student may be suspended prior to a pre-suspension conference if the student is contributing to an emergency situation in the school, as explained in 5-E DCMR § 2504.4.

7. How long does a parent/guardian have to submit documentation of an excused absence?

The student’s parent/guardian must provide the school with a written explanation of the reason for the student’s absence **within five (5) days** of a student’s return to school after an absence. Each school is required to update the student’s attendance record of the excused absence within 48 hours of receipt of the parent/guardian’s written absence documentation.

Attendance and Grading

1. How are late assignments handled for excused absences?

When a student has an excused absence, it is the responsibility of the teacher to work with the student so that they receive and can complete all make-up work. Students will be given the same amount of time to complete their work as the length of their absence.

2. How are late assignments handled for unexcused absences?

The current [Grading Policy](#) does not require teachers to provide students who have unexcused absences with an opportunity to recover assignments missed because of unexcused absences. It is up to the teacher’s discretion to determine how to handle missed work for unexcused absences. At the beginning of each course, teachers should make their policy on late work known to students.

3. How do unexcused absences affect a student’s grades?

A student’s attendance impacts her/his grades at three key points.

- When a student reaches her/his **5th unexcused absence**, she/he will receive a grade reduction (see table below for details).
- When a student reaches her/his **10th unexcused absence**, she/he will receive an “FA” (failure due to absence) for the term. An FA will count as an F for the term, and will be averaged with other term grades for a final course grade.
- When a student reaches her/his **30th unexcused absence**, she/he will receive an F for the entire course.

4. When a student reaches her/his 5th unexcused absence, how will the grade reduction be calculated?

When a student receives his/her 5th unexcused absences in a term, the course grade will be reduced by one level. A course grade will be reduced by one level for 5-9 absences as follows:

Grade Earned by Student during the Graded Instructional Period	Reported Grade Reduction
A	A-
A-	B+
B+	B
B	B-
B-	C+
C+	C
C	C-
C-	D+
D+	D
D	F
F	F

Please Note: A grade of a D will be reduced to an F and the student will not pass.

5. Can my student complete make-up work to have his/her term grade increased after the grade was posted?

No. Once a term grade is posted, it is final and cannot be increased with additional coursework.

Attendance and Grading for Transfer Students

1. What happens to students' absences when they transfer after the start of the school year?

If the student is coming from another DCPS school, her/his absences follow her/him to the new school.

If the student is coming from a non-DCPS school, she/he starts with zero (0) absences at her/his new DCPS school, even if the transcript indicates absences. This is because DCPS cannot verify accurate attendance entry from other schools/districts.

2. What happens if my child's previous school will not release her/his record?

It is important for the school to work with the student's parents to ensure they gain access to the student's record. Specific scheduling considerations will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

3. What are the scheduling options for transfer students who enter DCPS in the middle of the year, but need to complete an entire original credit course?

The scheduling and grading expectations for students transferring mid-year is dependent on when the transfer is taking place and whether the courses a student was previously enrolled in are offered at the receiving school. When a student transfers to a DCPS school from a school outside of DCPS, the receiving school requests the student's most current academic record to identify the courses that she/he was enrolled in at the sending school. Students and parents/guardians should meet with the receiving school counselor when transferring to ensure students are scheduled into the right classes.

4. Can high school students enroll in a course in another DCPS high school?

Yes, DCPS high school students may cross-enroll in courses in other DCPS high schools. DCPS students may do this in order to find a course not offered at her/his primary high school or due to scheduling reasons. In order to cross-enroll, a student must work with the counselor at her/his primary school. Unfortunately, at this time, DCPS cannot provide transportation between schools. However, DC's [Kids Ride Free](#) program provides free public transportation across the city.

5. What happens if a transfer student coming from another DCPS school already has 30 unexcused absences at the time he/she enrolls?

It is the responsibility of the sending school to give the student an F for the course, and the receiving school can enroll the student in another course for original credit.

Grade Appeals Due to Attendance

1. What are the appropriate criteria for an appeal of grade reduction or failure due to attendance?

A student or parent/guardian may appeal a grade reduction due to absences for the following reasons:

1. A computational or procedural error in the original assignment of the grade (mark)
2. The student and/or parent/guardian disputes the final grade (mark) received for a course or a term grade in a course where a final mark was received.

Note that if a student believes that the final grade issued is based on instructor or clerical error, prejudice, inaccuracy, or is not in alignment with established grading criteria in the course syllabus, the student may file an appeal and offer evidence to support the claim.

3. What is the time window for appeals?

Appeals must be submitted within 10 business days after the receipt of the failing grade. Individuals can initiate a request for an appeal in any written format. However, DCPS requests that families use the [DCPS Grade Reduction and Failure Due to Absence Appeal Form](#) to facilitate transmission of necessary information, which supports timely review and processing.

4. Who makes decisions about grade appeals due to attendance?

All appeals begin at the school level. Upon receipt of such an appeal, in accordance with 5-E DCMR § 2103.15, the principal shall:

- Appoint an appeals panel, and
- Forward all written appeal requests to the panel chairperson within three (3) business days.

5. Who is part of the grade appeals due to attendance panel?

In accordance with 5-E DCMR § 2103.16, the appeals panel shall consist of not less than three (3) members to be selected from the following:

- a. The principal's designee, who shall be the panel chairperson;
- b. A guidance counselor;
- c. A department chairperson;
- d. A teacher, other than the one involved;
- e. An attendance person;
- f. A student body representative; or
- g. A parent body representative.

Please note that appropriate substitutions may be made when necessary, in accordance with 5-E DCMR § 2103.17.

6. What are the key timelines associated with the school-based appeals due to attendance process?

In accordance with 5-E DCMR § 2103.18, the appeals panel shall hold a hearing within ten (10) calendar days after its appointment by the principal.

In accordance with 5-E DCMR § 2103.22, the panel's recommendation shall be forwarded immediately to the principal, who shall issue the decision within ten (10) calendar days after the hearing. The principal's written decision must provide a notification of appeal rights.

7. If an appeal due to attendance cannot be resolved at the school level, what happens?

If the student or his/her parent/guardian are not satisfied with the decision of the appeals panel and the principal, then a written appeal may be submitted to FAGradeCentralAppeal@dc.gov within ten (10) calendar days after receipt of decision. DCPS shall convene a hearing before an independent hearing officer, who shall issue the final administrative decision in the matter.

Pathways to Recovering a High School Credit

1. What options are available to students who need additional coursework to get back on track for graduation?

Students who need to recover credit in order to graduate have several options.

Option 1: Enroll in Credit Recovery – Credit recovery allows students to master material which the student didn't master in the original course. Students must have taken and failed a full 120 seat hour course or a 60 hour half-credit course, in order to enroll in credit recovery. In addition, the original credit course must be completed before a student enrolls in credit recovery. For example, if a student fails a full-year course in March with no clear path toward passing, then the student needs to wait until the following year to take credit recovery. Students may not be concurrently enrolled in credit recovery and original credit for the same course.

Option 2: Re-enroll in an Original Credit Course – Re-enrolling in an original credit is the second option for students who need to recover credit. For example, if a student fails Algebra 1, the student can re-take Algebra 1 for credit. Like credit recovery, a student must fail an original credit course to re-enroll in that course for credit. However, unlike credit recovery, as soon as a student has failed an original credit course due to having accrued 30+ unexcused absences, the student can withdraw from the course with an F and re-enroll in a new original credit course if it meets the seat hour requirement.

Option 3: Enroll in an Opportunity Academy – DCPS Opportunity Academies are Ballou STAY, Roosevelt STAY, Luke C. Moore and Washington-Metropolitan High Schools. These schools offer a competency-based approach to earning credit, which means there is not a seat hour requirement. Opportunity Academies are suited for students who are a year or more behind.

Below are several student scenarios and potential pathways:

- Student A attained 30 absences by December in a year-long, full credit course. The student is withdrawn from the course and receives an F on his transcript for the course. The student has not completed the full seat hours for the course and is not eligible to be enrolled in credit recovery. The student should be re-enrolled in an original credit course.
- Student B completed a full course and ultimately earned a failing grade. The student has completed the necessary seat hour requirement but needs additional coursework in the class to achieve the necessary level of mastery. The student should be enrolled in a credit recovery course the following year.
- Student C has received failing grades for several courses such that he needs to recover a full year of coursework. Given the number of courses he would need to retake, it would be very difficult to create a schedule at a traditional high school that would allow him to quickly get back on track. The student should be encouraged to transition to an Opportunity Academy, which would allow him to take competency-based coursework to complete his degree on an expedited timeline.

2. What is credit recovery?

Credit recovery provides a second-chance opportunity for students to learn course material and earn credit after she/he has failed the full 120 seat hour course or a 60 hour half-credit course. It is for students who learned some of the content, but who need more support and instruction in order to pass.

3. What are the grading requirements for credit recovery this Spring?

In accordance with District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR), **marks 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.**

For all courses, students must receive a passing mark if they receive a 64 percent or above in alignment with the grading structure below:

Grade Awarded	Is Credit Awarded?
A (93%to 100%)	Yes
A- (90% to 92%)	Yes
B+ (87%to 89%)	Yes
B (83% to 86%)	Yes
B- (80% to 82%)	Yes
C+ (77%to 79%)	Yes
C (73% to 76%)	Yes
C- (70% to 72%)	Yes
D+ (67%to 69%)	Yes
D (64% to 66%)	Yes
F (63% and below)	No

If students take Edgenuity as part of their credit recovery course, students must earn an 80 percent—up from 70 percent previously—on the online portion of the course. As outlined in the SY 2017-2018 DCPS credit recovery operations manual, and in accordance with DCMR, the online portion of a grade should account for 20 percent of the final grade. 80% of the grade is based upon teacher input.

4. Is it okay for a student to enroll in a credit recovery course prior to taking and failing the full original credit course?

No, this is an unacceptable practice.

5. Is the Grading Policy for an alternative pathway different from that of an original credit course?

No, the DCPS [Grading Policy](#) applies to all students enrolled in original credit courses, including those re-enrolled in original credit courses. Credit recovery courses have different requirements as detailed above.

Opportunity Academies

1. How does grading work in Opportunity Academies?

The DCPS Opportunity Academies offer a competency-based approach to grading, which means that students are working toward mastery of the material and do not have a seat hour requirement for courses. These four schools: Ballou STAY, Luke C Moore, Roosevelt STAY, and Washington Metropolitan use Summit Personalized learning for their competency-based courses.

Because the schools have received a seat hour waiver for these courses, grading in Summit courses at the Opportunity Academies differs from the full grading policy in the following ways:

- Students in Summit courses are not subject to a grade reduction for unexcused absences.
- Students in Summit courses are not subject to an “FA” mark when they reach 10 or more unexcused absences.
- However, students in Summit courses do receive a failing final mark if they accrue 30 unexcused absences.
 - Students may appeal this failing mark in accordance with the procedures outlined above if they can demonstrate that they have mastered the content necessary to pass the course. If the appeal is successful, they will be assigned the grade they earned.

Grading in courses offered outside of the Summit platform at the Opportunity Academies (such as elective courses) are still subject to the full DCPS [Grading Policy](#).

2. How do Opportunity Academies manage enrolling students who come up with a high number of unexcused absences (30+)? Should the school fail the student upon arrival and then re-enroll them in a new course?

When students accrue 30 unexcused absences, they should be assigned an F for the course at their home school prior to transferring. When they begin at an Opportunity Academy, they can start their failed coursework from the beginning with no unexcused absences on file.

For **non-Summit courses (such as electives)** at an Opportunity Academy: For students entering with 1-29 unexcused absences, transferring in from another DCPS school, the absences would follow the student.

For **Summit courses (core academic courses)** at an Opportunity Academy: For students entering with 1-29 unexcused absences, transferring in from another DCPS school, students should receive a final mark of W (withdraw) for the course from the sending school. They should then be enrolled in a competency-based course and required to complete the prescribed program of study. Because they are starting a new course, absences would be reset to 0 upon entry to the course.

Absence Excuse Note Form

Please excuse my child, _____ (PRINT NAME OF STUDENT).

He/she 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/sickness** (for 5 or more consecutive absences, doctor's note is required)
 - Medical/dental appointment** (please provide note from the medical provider)
 - Student judicial proceeding** (please provide document from court verifying presence)
 - Religious holiday**
 - Death in the family**
 - Other** (If you selected "other", please provide details. Please understand that under DC law, only certain absences may be accepted as excused absences.)
-
-
-

Parent Name (PRINT) _____

Parent Signature (SIGNATURE) _____

Parent Phone Number _____

Today's Date**: _____

****Note to Parents/Guardians: Please be aware that DC Law states that excuse notes written by parents must be turned into school staff within five days following a student's return from an absence for the absence to be excused.**