

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor, City of Baltimore

Neil E. Duke, Esq.
Chair, Baltimore City Board of
School Commissioners

Andrés A. Alonso, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer

New Grading Policy Implemented SY 2011-2012

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. Why was the District Grading Policy changed?

The purpose of City Schools' Grading and Reporting policy and regulation is to ensure systemic consistency and rigorous standards for assessing student achievement. This will be done using procedures that are based on clearly-defined and consistently-used formats for grading and reporting which are explained to students and parents.

The new policy provides the district-wide philosophy on the purpose and meaning of a grade in a way that did not exist previously. The new grading policy balances the autonomy given to schools with common standards so that grading practices are fair and consistent no matter what school a student attends. Additionally, these changes bring City Schools in line with national norms of grading and reporting and will consequently make our system more accessible for colleges and universities.

A change to the secondary GPA calculation was also approved by the Board. Previous to the Board's approval, grades for secondary students were numerical, which required conversion of GPA's for students applying to most colleges and universities. The new system is an Letter (+/-) based scale and incorporates a scale that rewards high achievement (A+) in all courses, and provides increased weight for students that completed honors, Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalarate (IB) courses. The weighted GPA allows students in rigorous courses to improve their overall GPA and potentially makes them more competitive for entrance into selective colleges and universities.

2. What was the process for deciding on the grading policy?

A Grading Policy Committee was formed in October 2010 and included parents, teachers, principals, community members and district office staff. The committee reviewed grading policies from other Maryland school districts. Two public forums were held on March 7 and March 28, 2011. The committee also met with community groups (SECAC, Baltimore Student Attendance Campaign, OSI). The policy was then vetted through various departments of the Office of the Chief Academic Officer. The Board approved the policy in June 2011.

3. What do the “new” grades look like for secondary students?

A+ = 97-100	B+ = 87-89	C+ = 77-79	D+ = 67-69	F = < 60
A = 94-96	B = 84-86	C = 74-76	D = 64-66	
A- = 90-93	B- = 80-83	C- = 70-73	D- = 60-63	

Rationale:

- Letter grades are more commonly used in secondary and post-secondary education.
- Plus and minus are used at the college and university level.
- The new grading scale is a more accountable way to measure student knowledge and skills and conveys greater specificity to differentiate levels of student achievement and mastery
- Our teachers, through the committee and forums, expressed that it is important to distinguish achievement and skill level in this way (i.e. they agree there is a difference between a 90 and a 98).
- An A+ recognizes and rewards the highest level of achievement and mastery of knowledge and skills; there is precedent in secondary and post-secondary schooling for awarding an A+.

4. How is GPA calculated for SY 2011-2012?

Grades	Standard Weight	Honors-Factor of 1.10	AP/IB-Factor of 1.20
A+	4.33	4.76	5.20
A	4.00	4.40	4.80
A-	3.67	4.04	4.32
B+	3.33	3.66	4.00
B	3.00	3.30	3.60
B-	2.67	2.94	3.20
C+	2.33	2.56	2.80
C	2.00	2.20	2.40
C-	1.67	1.84	2.00
D+	1.33	1.46	1.60
D	1.00	1.21	1.20
D-	.67	.74	.80
F	0	0	0

Rationale:

- Weights for honors (1.10) and Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate (1.20) courses is greater than in the previous GPA calculation (previously, it was 1.06 for Honors and 1.12 for AP/IB). This weighting rewards students who choose to take more challenging classes.
- Grade point average rewards high achievement (ex. A+) in all courses
- Scale is comparable to other secondary and post-secondary institutions (colleges and universities recognize letter grades on a 4.0 scale)

GPA calculation examples: Old vs. New

There are slight changes in GPA as a result of the grading policy. For some students, this may mean that their GPA has gone down slightly. However, students whose work reflects a high level of academic achievement (A+) will receive additional weight in their GPA. This new policy aligns the district with the 4.0 grading scale used by colleges and universities and allows colleges to see that City Schools' standards are in line with those of districts nationally.

Unweighted

Old Policy GPA	Old Policy 4.00 equivalent	New Policy 4.00 GPA
89.227	3.4227	3.413
97.380	4.2380	4.204
78.636	2.3636	2.380
82.904	2.7904	2.778

The weighted GPA provides an additional reward for students who choose to take more rigorous coursework (Honors, AP, and IB). With the new grading scale, a student who earns a B+ in an Honors class will receive the equivalent of an A- in a regular class. Similarly a student who earns a C+ in an AP or IB class will receive slightly more grade points than to a student who earned a B- in a regular class.

Weighted

Old Policy GPA	Old Policy 4.00 equivalent	New Policy 4.00 GPA
90.170	3.449	3.517
102.380	4.6380	4.721
79.686	2.4686	2.410

76.5952

2.15952

2.1669

For additional information, the entire policy and regulation can be found on the City Schools website on Board Docs (IKA and IKA-RA, June 28, 2011, <<http://www.boarddocs.com/mabe/bcpss/board.nsf/public#>>>).