

# BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Overview of Baltimore City Public Schools' Updates to its Grading Policy, Regulation, Practices, Procedures, and Processes

July 27, 2022

At the request of the Maryland State Department of Education (“MSDE”), Baltimore City Public Schools (“City Schools”) is providing this overview and supporting documentation regarding updates to our grading policies and practices in recent years, as well as our efforts to implement those changes. In a letter, dated June 23, 2022, Mohammed Choudhury, State Superintendent of Schools, acknowledged that City Schools has taken substantial steps to improve grading policies and practices. City Schools greatly appreciates the support offered by MSDE to assist in further improvement efforts.

City Schools shares the State Superintendent’s sense of responsibility to ensure that all students have the highest quality education, including student grading policies that are clear, transparent, and implemented with fidelity. If grades do not accurately reflect what students have achieved, teachers cannot provide the instruction and support that students need to succeed. For these reasons, City Schools launched a comprehensive overhaul of our grading policy and practices, beginning in 2017. As discussed in more detail below, the overhaul included significant revisions to strengthen [Board Policy IKA \(Grading and Reporting\)](#). The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners (“Board”) adopted these changes in May 2019. These policy revisions, as well as updates to our administrative regulations and guidance, enhance safeguards against inappropriate grading practices, while also clarifying the circumstances when grade changes are necessary and entirely legitimate. For example, a student may have completed make-up work that should be included; an assignment or test may have been left out by accident; a child on long-term medical absence may be doing work through an alternative program; or a mathematical error might need to be corrected.

City Schools has prioritized these efforts despite the state’s long-standing legacy of systemic underfunding, resulting in limited access to resources that are available in other school systems. While there is still more work to be done to fully and consistently implement policy changes, City Schools is committed to continuing to make substantial progress moving forward.

### **I. Updates to City Schools’ Grading Policy and Administrative Regulation**

[Board Policy IKA \(Grading and Reporting\)](#) outlines City Schools’ philosophy towards fair, consistent, and equitable grading, grounded in instructional best practices. Board Policy IKA is rooted in a belief in school-based autonomy bounded by common standards that guide excellence:

In Baltimore, schools are empowered to make decisions for their students because we believe that school leaders, teachers, and other members of school communities know best what students need to succeed. At the same time, we are one school district, committed to high standards and the provision of a rigorous and engaging education for every student.

Board Policy IKA was originally developed in 2011, and it was updated as part of a comprehensive overhaul process launched in 2017. City Schools developed proposed revisions through research on best practices and undertook a comparative analysis of other Maryland districts as well as peer districts nationwide. The revision process was spearheaded by a cross-functional workgroup of school and district staff and factored in significant amounts of input from a variety of stakeholders, including school-based staff, central office staff, students, parents, and community partners. The input process included surveys, panels, and presentations to stakeholder organizations.

The updates to Board Policy IKA and the accompanying Chief Executive Officer's [Administrative Regulation IKA-RA \(Grading and Reporting\)](#) continue to adhere to City Schools' commitment to school-based autonomy. Schools are permitted to adopt their own grading policies, but the revisions set forth a series of research-based common standards to ensure a level of fairness, consistency, and equity across the school system, including the following:

- *Shift focus to opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery:* This shift is reflected in system-wide requirements that increase the weight on assessments (including exams, projects, presentations, etc.).
  - At all schools, a minimum of 70 percent of a student's grade must be based on assessments.
  - Schools have some discretion to identify the portion of student grades that shall be based on classwork, participation, and homework, but the combined total of these category weights must not exceed 30 percent of the overall grade, with homework not exceeding 10 percent of the overall grade.
- *Provide multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery:*
  - The updates to Board Policy IKA and Administrative Regulation IKA-RA retained the requirement that if a student receives an F as a marking period grade, the numerical equivalent of that grade cannot be lower than a 50 when used to calculate the student's final grade. If a student failed a marking period by earning a 50-59, that score should remain unchanged when calculating the student's final grade. This requirement is meant to allow students to improve their grade through diligent work in subsequent marking periods to pass the course.
  - The updates added encouragement for schools to provide opportunities to reassess students on assignments during the marking period. If a student's understanding of the content assessed on a summative assignment shows improvement upon reassessment, that grade may be replaced with the new grade that the student earned.
- *Increase communication of grades:* Teachers are required to record grades using City Schools' online grade book platform and update assignment grades at a minimum of once per week in core subjects.
- *Standardize grade change guidelines:* Administrative Regulation IKA-RA makes clear that all grade changes shall follow guidance released by City Schools' Academics Office, as discussed further below.
- *Align Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB) grades with standards set by their authorizing organizations.*
- *Update and standardize GPA calculations.*

The initial proposed revisions to Board Policy IKA and Administrative Regulation IKA-RA were presented to the Policy Committee in February 2019. See [Policy Committee Power Point Presentation](#); [Policy Revisions Presented to Policy Committee](#); [Administrative Regulation Revisions Presented to Policy Committee](#). Based on additional stakeholder feedback, further revisions to Board Policy IKA and Administrative Regulation IKA-RA were presented to the full Board for First Reader on March 26, 2019. See [First Reader Power Point Presentation](#); [Policy Revisions Presented on First Reader](#); [Administrative Regulation Revisions Presented on First Reader](#). The proposed revisions then moved to Second Reader on May 14, 2019. See [Second Reader Power Point Presentation](#); [Policy Revisions Presented on Second Reader](#); [Regulation Revisions Presented on Second Reader](#). The revisions were approved by the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners in May 2019 for implementation beginning in school year 2019-20. In addition, these updates were incorporated into City Schools' requirements for public charter schools. Pursuant to [Board Policy IHBJ \(Public Charter Schools\)](#) and the accompanying [Administrative Regulation IHBJ-RA](#), public charter schools may have more rigorous requirements than the district's; however, Board Policy IKA and Administrative Regulation IKA-RA are upheld as the minimum standard.<sup>1</sup>

## **II. Updates to Grade Change Procedures in Alignment with COMAR Revisions**

Even before revisions to Board Policy IKA and Administrative Regulation IKA-RA were completed, City Schools had upgraded guidance for schools regarding grade change procedures, as well as the accompanying grade change forms, in April 2018. See [City Schools Grade Change Guidelines, 2018](#); [City Schools' Historical Grade Change Form, 2018](#).

This guidance and the accompanying forms were further updated at the beginning of school year 2019-20 to fully align with revisions to Board Policy IKA and Administrative Regulation IKA-RA, as well as revisions adopted by MSDE to COMAR 13A.03.02.08 (Grading and Reporting) in December 2018. See [Summary Report – Revisions to IKA-RA Attachment 1, IKA-RA Form 1, and IKA-RA Form 2](#); [Proposed COMAR Changes, April 2018](#); [Adopted COMAR Changes, December 2018](#). These revisions remain operative through the present.

The guidelines set forth in the [City Schools Grade Change Process \(IKA-RA Attachment I\)](#) “ensure that the circumstances that necessitate grade changes and the procedures to execute grade changes are consistent districtwide and in line with board policy.” These documents provided schools with clearer expectations on when grade changes are acceptable, the processes utilized to make changes, the documentation required to substantiate grade changes, and appeal procedures. The guidelines and accompanying forms also differentiate between grade change processes initiated while the school year is still in progress and what is called the historical grade change process for grade changes that are initiated and occur after a school year is completed or after a final grade is placed on a transcript. See [IKA-RA Form I \(Grade Change Request Form\)](#); [IKA-RA Form 2 \(Historical Grade Change Request Form\)](#). Historical grade changes must be submitted

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<sup>1</sup> These updates to Board Policy IKA and Administrative Regulation IKA-RA aligned with prior revisions to [Board Policy IKEA](#) and [Administrative Regulation IKEA-RA](#), which address grade promotion and retention. Substantive revisions to Board Policy IKEA and Administrative Regulation IKEA-RA were adopted in 2017 and align high school grade progression with credits in specific content areas (e.g., earning 5 credits, including Math and English, to progress from 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade).

utilizing City Schools' online HEAT platform for appropriate documentation, review, approval, and auditing by central office staff. District staff's review of a historical grade change includes validating that the following criteria were met, per the school's attestation:

- Work aligns with the standards of course taken;
- Assignment content, category, and weight justify the requested grade change;
- Work was graded thoroughly;
- Work necessitating a grade change was completed in the current school year; and
- The grade change reflects assignment/assessment.

### **III. Implementation of Grading Policy Updates in the School Year 2019-20**

City Schools' upgrades to Board Policy IKA, Administrative Regulation IKA-RA, and the accompanying guidance were implemented at the beginning of school year 2019-20. City Schools undertook the following trainings and guidance:

- The July 25, 2019 edition of the Leadership Action Update transmitted to school leaders included an overview of the grading policy changes and a timeline and agenda for training and other implementation efforts. See [Leadership Action Update, July 25, 2019 - "Grading Policy Changes and Next Steps"](#)
- During the CEO's Leadership Institute in August 2019, the Academics Office provided a mandatory training for all school leaders and their leadership teams, including detailed explanation of key policy changes and their implications. Additionally, principals and leaders had the opportunity to attend a "deep dive" training on grading policy implementation led by a fellow school leader. See [2019 CEO Institute schedule](#); [District Grading Policy Implementation Guidance, Power Point, August 19-21, 2019](#); [Grading Policy Deep Dive, Power Point, August 19-21, 2019](#).
- Using the same presentation as was used in the CEO's Leadership Institute in August 2019, systemic training was also provided for school counselors.
- In October 2019, all teachers were required to watch an eight-minute training video about the revisions to Board Policy IKA and the accompanying regulations and guidance, including types of assessment and entry of grades into the online grade book. See [Grading Policy Training Video, Fall 2019](#). The training video was followed by a [quiz](#) to assess comprehension.
- In November 5, 2019, the Academics Office met with principal supervisors, known as Instructional Leadership Executive Directors (ILEDs), to address any concerns about policy implementation and to discuss available monitoring tools. See [ILED Presentation, PowerPoint, November 5, 2019](#).
- To clarify concerns about the grading policy and to provide further guidance about its implementation, Chief of Schools John Davis sent communication to school staff and to families in December 2019. See [City Schools Staff Grading Policy Letter, December 2019 and Grading Policy Letter from Chief Davis to Families, December 2, 2019](#).
- On December 5, 2019, at the start of a professional development day, John Davis, Chief of Schools (and interim Chief Academic Officer at the time), provided additional grading policy guidance to school leaders. This guidance clarified the rationale for the policy changes, the definition of assessments, and gradebook entry requirements. See [Chief Davis](#)

[Opening Grading Policy Slides](#). Later on December 5, 2019, City Schools offered additional training on the implementation of the upgrades to Board Policy IKA and the accompanying administrative regulation and guidance. The sessions, which were led by other principals, gave school leaders the opportunity to share with their peers about the implementation process at their school; how school leaders were helping teacher teams use grades to inform instructional decisions; and how school leaders were monitoring that teacher implementation was aligned with the school's grading philosophy. See [Citywide Leadership Panel Description, December 5, 2019](#).

- Training for school-based staff was supplemented with additional resources developed by the Academics Office. City Schools held training in February 2020 where district leads presented the implications of the grading policy change for each content area. See [Grading Webinar Template](#) and, as an example, [Grading Webinar Computer Science K-8](#). Additionally, City Schools developed a document entitled [City Schools Assessment Guidance](#), which clarified the types of assignments that count as assessments, under the updates to Board Policy IKA and Administrative Regulation IKA-RA, which (as discussed above) placed a renewed emphasis on assessments. Staff created guidance by content area on the range of assignments that constitute an assessment, given the increased weight of assessments in the revised policy. A sample of assessment guidance by content area for school year 2019-20 is provided below.
  - [Early Learning Assessment Guidelines](#)
  - [ESOL Assessment Guidelines](#)
  - [Fine Arts Assessment Guidelines](#)
  - [Health Assessment Guidelines](#)
  - [Library Sciences Assessment Guidelines](#)
  - [Literacy Assessment Guidelines](#)
  - [Mathematics Assessment Guidelines](#)
  - [Physical Education Assessment Guidelines](#)
  - [Science Assessment Guidelines](#)
  - [Social Studies Assessment Guidelines](#)
  - [World Languages Assessment Guidelines](#)

Assessment guidance by content area has also been provided for [school year 2020-21](#) and [school year 2021-22](#).

- In order to make connections with students and families about the new policy and regulations, in March 2020, City Schools developed an [infographic](#) about the new grading policy. This was to be followed by specific school-based training for students on the policy, but this training was sidelined by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **IV. Review of School-Specific Grading Policies**

An important component of the implementation of the 2019 revisions to Board Policy IKA and Administrative Regulation IKA-RA was the process for developing, reviewing, and approving of school-based grading policies. Each spring, schools are required to submit their school-specific grading policy drafts for the following school year. The Academics and Schools Offices review drafts for consistency with Board Policy IKA, Administrative Regulation IKA-RA, and related guidance. Schools make any necessary adjustments or edits over the summer, and then they



communicate their district-aligned and approved policies to teachers before the school year commences, and to students and their families at the beginning of the school year. For example, this process was summarized for school year 2022-23, with specific deadlines, at a meeting with school leaders on May 18, 2022. See [Academic Stat, PowerPoint Presentation, May 18, 2022, Slides 11-15](#).

Starting in school year 2019-20, the district collected records of school-level grading policies from the school year 2014-15 through school year 2021-22 on our district Grading Policy SharePoint Site; school-level policies from school year 2019-20 through school year 2021-22 have been approved by the district's central office staff. See [Annual Review of School Grading Policies](#). If schools do not submit a school-specific grading policy for review and approval, their policy reverts to the district policy.

#### V. **Building on the Foundation Established by Infinite Campus Grade Reporting Protocols, Quality Control, and Data Monitoring Tools**

The development and implementation of significant updates to City Schools' grading policy, regulation, guidance, protocols, and processes built on the solid foundation established by a prior systemic initiative to transition and upgrade the district's student information system, including its electronic grade book platform. During school year 2016-17 City Schools began a transition of its student information system from SMS to Infinite Campus. To support this transition, training and guidance documents were provided to support school-based staff, tailored and differentiated by staff roles. Teacher coaches were identified and trained to serve as leads for the implementation of the transition to Infinite Campus in their respective buildings. See [Teacher Coach Training](#) (February 2017).

In February 2017, City Schools disseminated expectations for monitoring and support of grading entry expectations in a letter from Andre Cowling, Chief of Schools, Sean Conley, Chief Academic Officer, and Theresa Jones, Chief Achievement and Accountability Officer. The purpose of this letter was to "explain the importance of recording grades in Infinite Campus, outline the district's expectations regarding grade entry, describe resources available to support [school principals] in entering grades, and communicate accountability steps that will be taken for school principals whose schools do not enter grades for their students in Infinite Campus." *Id.* The letter also set forth a specific "accountability timeline" for quality control measures to ensure that teachers entered assignment and assessment grades regularly. This timeline included internal twice-monthly updates throughout the year to principal supervisors and relevant district support staff to highlight schools with mismatched and missing grades, as well as support to schools from central office staff, as needed. The timeline culminated with Notices of Concern issued by the Chief of Schools and the Chief Achievement and Accountability Officer to school principals whose schools have greater than 5% of total missing quarter grades remaining at the end of the school year. In each subsequent school year, a letter on grade entry expectations has been shared with school leaders. Schools with greater than 5% of missing quarter grades have been notified at the end of Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 and Notices of Concern have been issued at the end of the school year.

- [Grade Entry Letter School Year 2017- 18](#)
- [Grade Entry Letter School Year 2018- 19](#)
- [Grade Entry Letter School Year 2019- 20](#)

- [Grade Entry Letter School Year 2020- 21](#)
- [Grade Entry Letter School Year 2021- 22](#)

In preparation for full systemwide implementation of Infinite Campus for school year 2017-18, City Schools developed twenty videos to train teachers how to use Infinite Campus. See [twenty videos](#). A number of these videos focused on utilization of the grade book modules within Infinite Campus, as well as specific guidance on creating and managing gradebook categories and assignments, and directions on how to post grades, disaggregated for grades PreK-5, 6-8, and 9-12 grade teachers. See [Infinite Campus Training Video 3.1: Gradebook Overview](#); [Infinite Campus Training Video 3.2: Gradebook – Creating and Managing Categories](#); [Infinite Campus Training Video 4.1: Posting Grades – Overview](#); [Infinite Campus Training Video 4.2: Posting Grades – Grades PreK-5](#); [Infinite Campus Training Video 4.3: Posting Grades – Grades 6-8](#); [Infinite Campus Training Video 4.4: Posting Grades – Grades 9-12](#). Teachers also were required to complete an online assessment tied to the Infinite Campus training.

Additionally, school leaders received Infinite Campus training between July 5 and October 4, 2017, provided by City Schools’ facilitators and consultants from Infinite Campus who all used the same facilitation guide. See [Infinite Campus Training Presentation for Building Administrators](#); [Building Administrative Training: Facilitation Guide](#).

As Infinite Campus was implemented system-wide, City Schools staff continued to work with consultants from Infinite Campus to upgrade and improve guidance, training, and monitoring tools, resources, and supports. Beginning in school year 2016-17, City Schools provided training to support grade reporters with end-of-year procedures in Infinite Campus, including grading, promotion/retention, and graduation. Grade reporters play critical roles in City Schools’ grading processes. They are designated at each school by the principal. Grade Reporters are primarily tasked with providing technical assistance at their home schools with grade related issues like entering and publishing grades as well as training school staff.

Specific procedures highlighted in these trainings include finalizing grades for seniors; finalizing grades for PreK through grade 11 students; using summer entry and exit codes; and posting grades. In 2020, additional training sessions were added.

- [End of Year Procedures School Year 2016-17](#)
- [End of Year Procedures School Year 2016-17 - Seniors](#)
- [End of Year Procedures School Year 2017-18](#)
- [End of Year Procedures School Year 2018-19 - Elementary](#)
- [End of Year Procedures School Year 2019-20 - Elementary](#)
- [End of Year Procedures School Year 2019-20 - Secondary](#)
- [End of Year Procedures School Year 2019-20 - Seniors](#)
- [Grade Reporter Training, October 2020](#)
- [Grade Reporter Refresher Training, January 2021](#)
- [End of Year Training School Year 2020-21 - Elementary](#)
- [End of Year Training School Year 2020-21 - Secondary](#)
- [End of Year Training School Year 2020-21 - Seniors](#)
- [Grade Reporter Training, September 2021](#)

- [End of Year Training School Year 2021-22 - Elementary/Middle](#)
- [End of Year Training School Year 2021-22 - High School](#)
- [End of Year Training School Year 2021-2022 - Seniors](#)

These trainings connect staff to reference guides and tools to assist in identifying discrepancies resulting from teachers' manual entry of grades and support final grade reporting procedures, such as:

- [Data Cleansing Report #126 Help Guide](#): Missing Grades
- [Data Cleansing Report #135 Help Guide](#): Mismatched Grades
- [Data Cleansing Report #144 Help Guide](#): Multiple Posted Marking Period or Exam Grade
- [Data Cleansing Report #145 Help Guide](#): Grades Summary Report
- [Data Cleansing Report #148/#149 Help Guide](#): Grading Summary Report for Grade Level 9 - 12 (DCR 148) and Grading Summary Report for Grade Level PreK-8 (DCR 149)
- [Gradebook Usage Report](#)
- [Infinite Campus Reference Guide, Final Grade Differs from Transcript Report](#);
- [Infinite Campus Reference Guide, Transcript-Missing and Incorrect Values Report](#); and

Links to these Infinite Campus resources and tools are communicated in reminders sent on regular intervals to correspond with report card and progress report deadlines throughout the year, along with reminders and clarifications of guidance. These bulletins included key timelines and directions for how to use various reports to identify and correct gradebook errors. After the revisions to Board Policy IKA and Administrative Regulation IKA-RA, these communications were updated to highlight upgrades to support implementation of the policy and regulation revisions. The Academics Office distributes grade reporting bulletins in advance of quarterly progress reports and report cards reporting deadlines. These grade reporting bulletins are disseminated to school leaders and grade reporters.

The grade reporting bulletins summarize key grade reporting requirements and tasks for grade reporters and teachers, and they also include instructions for running reports in Infinite Campus to ensure students are being graded, to monitor teachers' progress in posting grades, and show cases where the percent value does not correspond to the letter. Below are links to a sampling of grade reporting bulletins from the school year 2016-17 school year through school year 2021-22:

#### School Year 2016-17

- [Quarter 1 Progress Report Instructions, School Year 2016-17](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 1 Report Cards, School Year 2016-17](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 2 Progress Reports, School Year 2016-17](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 2 Report Cards, School Year 2016-17](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 3 Progress Reports, School Year 2016-17](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 3 Report Cards, School Year 2016-17](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 4 Progress Reports, School Year 2016-17](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 4 Report Cards, School Year 2016-17](#)

#### School Year 2017-18

- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 1 Progress Report, School Year 2017-18](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 1 Report Card, School Year 2017-18](#)



- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 2 Progress Report, School Year 2017-18](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 2 Report Card, School Year 2017-18](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 3 Progress Report, School Year 2017-18](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 3 Report Card, School Year 2017-18](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 4 Progress Report, School Year 2017-18](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 4 Report Card, School Year 2017-18](#)

#### School Year 2018-2019

- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 1 Progress Report, School Year 2018-19](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 1 Report Card, School Year 2018-19](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 2 Progress Report, School Year 2018-19](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 2 Report Card, School Year 2018-19](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 3 Progress Report, School Year 2018-19](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 3 Report Card, School Year 2018-19](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 4 Progress Report, School Year 2018-19](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 4 Report Card, School Year 2018-19](#)

#### School Year 2019-2020

- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 1 Progress Report, School Year 2019-20](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 1 Report Card, School Year 2019-20](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 2 Progress Report, School Year 2019-20](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 2 Report Card, School Year 2019-20](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 3 Progress Report, School Year 2019-20](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 3 Report Card, School Year 2019-20](#)

In school year 2019-20, disruptions due to COVID-19 led to a series of adjustments to grade reporting for 4th quarter progress reports and report cards, which were shared with schools in additional communications (see Section IX).

#### School Year 2020-21

- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 1 Progress Report, School Year 2020-21](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 1 Report Card, School Year 2020-21](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 2 Progress Report, School Year 2020-21](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 2 Report Card, School Year 2020-21](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 3 Progress Report, School Year 2020-21](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 3 Report Card, School Year 2020-21](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 4 Progress Report, School Year 2020-21](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 4 Report Card, School Year 2020-21](#)

#### School Year 2021-22

- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 1 Progress Report, School Year 2021-22](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 1 Report Card, School Year 2021-22](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 2 Progress Report, School Year 2021-22](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 2 Report Card, School Year 2021-22](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 3 Progress Report, School Year 2021-22](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 3 Report Card, School Year 2021-22](#)

- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 4 Progress Report, School Year 2021-22](#)
- [Grade Reporting Bulletin: Quarter 4 Report Card, School Year 2021-22](#)

The Academics Office provided additional grading and reporting guidance to school leaders through reminders incorporated into the Leadership Action Updates that City Schools distributed weekly during school years 2016-17 through 2019-20, and shifted to daily emails beginning after the school closures in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, reminders were sent out at the end of each marking period with instructions on posting grades and resources for support and assistance. Below are links to a sampling of these Leadership Action Updates and Daily Updates:

- School Year 2016-17 Leadership Action Updates
  - [Building Administrator Training on Infinite Campus, School Year 2016-17](#)
  - [Grade Posting for School Year 2016-17](#)
  - [Preparing for Q1 Report Cards, School Year 2016-17](#)
  - [Preparing for Q2 Progress Reports, School Year 2016-17](#)
  - [Preparing for Q2 Report Cards, School Year 2016-17](#)
  - [Preparing for Q3 Progress Reports, School Year 2016-17](#)
  - [Preparing for Q3 Report Cards, School Year 2016-17](#)
  - [Preparing for Q4 Progress Reports, School Year 2016-17](#)
  - [Preparing for Q4 Report Cards, School Year 2016-17](#)
- School Year 2017-18 Leadership Action Updates
  - [Grade Reporting Posting Windows for School Year 2017-18](#)
  - [Preparing for Q1 Progress Reports, School Year 2017-18](#)
  - [Preparing for Q1 Report Cards, School Year 2017-18](#)
  - [Preparing for Q2 Progress Reports, School Year 2017-18](#)
  - [Preparing for Q2 Report Cards, School Year 2017-18](#)
  - [Grading and Missing Grades, January 27, 2018](#)
  - [Preparing for Q3 Progress Reports, School Year 2017-18](#)
  - [Preparing for Q3 Report Cards, School Year 2017-18](#)
  - [Q4 Posting Updates, School Year 2017-18](#)
  - [Preparing for Q4 Progress Reports, School Year 2017-18](#)
  - [Preparing for Q4 Report Cards, School Year 2017-18](#)
- School Year 2018-2019 Leadership Action Updates
  - [Infinite Campus Quarterly Posting Dates, School Year 2018-19](#)
  - [Preparing for Q1 Progress Reports, School Year 2018-19](#)
  - [Preparing for Q1 Report Cards, School Year 2018-19](#)
  - [Preparing for Q2 Progress Reports, School Year 2018-19](#)
  - [Preparing for Q2 Report Cards, School Year 2018-19](#)
  - [Preparing for Q3 Progress Reports, School Year 2018-19](#)
  - [Preparing for Q3 Report Cards, School Year 2018-19](#)
  - [Preparing for Q4 Progress Reports, School Year 2018-19](#)
  - [Preparing for Q4 Report Cards, School Year 2018-19](#)

- School Year 2019-2020 Leadership Action Updates
  - [Thursday, July 25, 2019 - Grading Policy Changes and Next Steps](#)
  - [Infinite Campus Quarterly Posting Dates, School Year 2019-20](#)
  - [Preparing for Q1 Progress Reports, School Year 2019-20](#)
  - [Preparing for Q1 Report Cards, School Year 2019-20](#)
  - [Preparing for Q2 Progress Reports, School Year 2019-20](#)
  - [Preparing for Q2 Report Cards, School Year 2019-20](#)
  - [Preparing for Q3 Progress Reports, School Year 2019-20](#)
  - [Preparing for Q3 Report Cards, School Year 2019-20](#)
  - [Preparing for Q4 Progress Reports, School Year 2019-20](#)
  - [Quarter 4 and Final Grade Guidance, April 20, 2020](#)
  - [Quarter 4 and Final Grade Guidance - Addendum, May 15, 2020](#)
- School Year [2020-21 Daily Updates](#) (compiled updates related to grading)
- School Year [2021-22 Daily Updates](#) (compiled updates related to grading)

Starting in school year 2017-18, the Academic Office also sent out communications to all teachers at the end of each marking period with reminders to post grades and resources for support and assistance. A sampling of those emails is linked below.

- School Year 2017-18:
  - [School Year 2017-18 Marking Period Dates](#)
  - [Grade Change Process](#)
  - [Historical Grade Change Form](#)
  - [End of Year Procedures](#)
- School Year 2018-19 [Quarter](#) and [Trimester](#) Marking Period Dates
- School Year 2019-20 [Quarter](#) and [Trimester](#) Marking Period Dates
- School Year 2020-21 [Quarter](#) and [Trimester](#) Marking Period Dates
- School Year 2021-22 [Quarter](#) and [Trimester](#) Marking Period Dates

City Schools' internal websites for school staff also include compilations of many of the resources on grading linked above for easy access by school leaders, grader reporters, and teachers.

## **VI. City Schools' Quality Control Process to Support Grade Reporting to MSDE**

The Office of Achievement and Accountability submits a Student-Course-Grade-Teacher ("SCGT") file to MSDE twice annually. This file contains student demographics, teacher demographics, final grades, and course status for all credit-bearing courses for all students in the district. MSDE uses the SCGT file to calculate class size averages and informs multiple metrics in the Maryland Report Card, including the "well-rounded" curriculum measures.

In support of this work, the Knowledge Management team in the Office of Achievement and Accountability creates and distributes a missing grades tracker to ensure that schools and district leaders can monitor the submission of grades. The tracker also identifies letter to number grade mismatches that can occur when grades are manually entered at the school level. The SCGT

process includes resolving errors and identifying missing data. Knowledge Management works with schools and the Office Human Capital to provide accurate student and teacher data to MSDE. By the final submission of the End of Year SCGT file in late July, all courses must have final grades. If a grade is still missing, the course will be reported to MSDE as incomplete.

## **VII. Central Office Staffing to Support Grading Processes**

Several positions across the district office support assessment, grading, promotion, and retention as a part of their responsibilities. The relevant portion of their work is referenced below:

- *Director of Academic Strategy* in the Academic Office leads the grading workgroup and coordinates the district's strategy and approach to implementation of the grading policy and regulations.
- *Director of College Readiness* in the College and Career Readiness Office manages the Scheduling and Grading team, which includes:
  - *Coordinator, High School Scheduling and Strategy* leads the internal district processes related to grading and scheduling and provides final approval for grade changes.
    - *Manager - Scheduling and Grading IT Support* helps to manage the Infinite Campus system, provides technical support to schools on grading and scheduling processes, and regularly pulls reports for various district offices.
    - *Scheduling and Grade Reporting Analysts* (3) provide training for grade reporters and school administrators, review historical grade changes, and provide technical and strategic support for the school-facing use of Infinite Campus.
- *Coordinator of Instructional Technology & Media* in the Office of Teaching and Learning provides training and guidance to teachers on the use of Infinite Campus and the teacher gradebook.
- *Executive Director of High School Innovation* in the Schools Office leads the district's work to review and revise scheduling models and support the implementation of strong instruction at the secondary level.
- *Director of Knowledge Management and the Manager of Data Quality* in the Office of Achievement and Accountability support the analysis and monitoring of district-wide grading through the grade entry monitoring, the Student-Course-Grade-Teacher analysis, and regular reporting on the status of grading across schools.
- *Database Administrator IV- Student Information System* in the Office of Information Technology provides the technical support for Infinite Campus, creating, testing, and running reports, and providing the monitoring tools required for schools and district to assess grading completion.

As noted above, the Office of College and Career Readiness houses the Scheduling and Grading Team, which led the development of revisions to Board Policy IKA and Administrative Regulation IKA-RA in school year 2018-19. Based on the increased training and support needs across the district, in school year 2020-21, City Schools added two central office staff positions, a Coordinator for High School Scheduling and Strategy and an additional Analyst for Grading and Scheduling to support, review, and audit school grading practices.

Much of the support provided by the Scheduling and Grading Team is for grade reporters. The grade reporter is a school-based role with the following responsibilities:

- Follows all grading rules, which limits the need for report card changes by ensuring accurate records.
- Ensures that grade change processes are followed, and grade change documentation is maintained appropriately.
- Updates Student Information System (Infinite Campus) report card after the grade changes are approved.
- Serves as Home and Hospital Liaison, ensuring all Home and Hospital grades are calculated and entered into the gradebook as soon as they are received.
- Must be a City School employee, but not the school counselor or principal.

## **VII. Internal Investigations of Alleged Policy Violations**

In addition to City Schools’ ongoing monitoring of grading protocols and quality control measures, alleged violations of Board Policy IKA can also trigger internal investigations. The Staff Investigations Unit (“SIU”) in the Department of Fair Practices and Compliance is responsible for conducting these internal investigations, often with support from the Schools Office and the Office of Achievement and Accountability. Investigations typically include a thorough review of all relevant data and documents, along with interviews with those who may have been involved in or have information about the investigation’s subject. If the investigation concludes that improper activity took place, a hearing is held by the district’s Human Capital Office with the staff members involved. At the end of this process, if the allegation is upheld, appropriate disciplinary action is taken, depending on the nature and severity of the findings and any mitigating circumstances. This can range from a formal reprimand in a personnel file to termination of employment.

As reported on City Schools’ website at this [link](#), between 2010 and September 2017, 13 investigations were initiated. Of this total, only six were substantiated. During school year 2017-18, City Schools’ Office of Achievement and Accountability proactively conducted an analysis of grading at all schools, and investigations were launched into five high schools where 15 percent or more of the 2017 graduating class had grade changes related to graduation requirements. None of the investigations found that grades had been improperly changed. A summary of these investigations is available on the City Schools’ website at this [link](#). Five other investigations were started after September 2017 and completed by March 2019. Only two were substantiated. In October 2017, City Schools CEO Dr. Sonja Santelises sent a [letter](#) to all City Schools employees highlighting the necessity of integrity in grade reporting and providing contact information for reporting potential unethical behavior.

More recently, City Schools’ investigation and follow up at Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts identified grading improprieties. The results are summarized in a public report issued in August 2021, which is available on our website at this [link](#). City Schools is working with MSDE’s Office of Audits to address enrollment eligibility issues that were identified in this investigation.

## **IX. Temporary Adjustments to Grading During the COVID-19 Pandemic**



In school year 2017-18, City Schools’ developed a cross-functional grading workgroup that played an instrumental role in developing revisions to Board Policy IKA. That group continued to meet in the following years to support training and school-level guidance on the recent revisions to Board Policy IKA and Administrative Regulation IKA-RA. In school years 2019-20 and 2020-21, the grading workgroup played a critical role in formulating adjustments to grading protocols to address the challenges that students faced during the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent closure of school buildings and shift to virtual instruction in 2019-2020 and 2020-21. *See* sample meeting agendas from school years [2019-20](#) and [2020-21](#). Like school systems across Maryland and throughout the nation, City Schools adopted temporary adjustments to its grading protocols for the 4th quarter and final grades for school year 2019-20. These temporary adjustments were communicated in [grading guidance](#) provided on April 20, 2020, as well as an [addendum](#) on May 15, 2020. These adjustments included:

- Pass/Incomplete grading option for quarter 4.
- The final grade was a computation of quarters 1-2 (Semester 1) and quarter 3 (Semester 2), with up to ten (10) additional points for semester courses and six (6) additional points to be earned toward the final number grade for full-year courses, based on the proportion of assignments completed in virtual learning.

These adjustments were only implemented through the end of school year 2019-20. For school year 2020-21, City Schools conducted instruction in predominantly virtual and hybrid learning environments. As a result, City Schools reexamined its grading guidance regarding grade categories, differentiating assessments, increasing teacher grading frequency to a minimum of one classwork/participation grades per week and one formative assessment every two weeks, and clarifying classwork, participation, and homework expectations in a virtual learning environment. *See* [Memo on IKA-RA Revisions](#).

Specifically, the guidance for this school year included:

- **Tracking Student Progress:** Teachers must enter one classwork/participation grades per week, one formative assessment every two weeks, and summative assessments as assigned according to the Assessment Strategy.
- **Assessment Composition:** 70% (50% Formative and 20% Summative)
- **Classwork/Participation:** 30% (Combine categories into one category, totaling 30% weight for the new classwork/participation category or keep the categories (Classwork & Participation) separate, to operate as two standalone categories and assign the classwork/participation percentages with a minimum of 10% in the classwork and participation category.

Additionally, recognizing the COVID-19 pandemic’s significant impact on students’ learning, City Schools shifted to using Not Complete/No Credit (“NC”) as a final grade option in certain situations for school year 2020-21. Before coming to this decision, City Schools engaged significantly with school leaders to hear their perspectives. *See* [School Readiness Presentation on Grading, Promotion, and Retention, PowerPoint, May 6, 2021](#) and [Academic Stat Presentation on Grading, Promotion, and Retention Next Steps, Power Point, May 13, 2021](#). The district also

engaged parents through our Parent and Community Advisory Board. See [Grading and Promotion/Retention Feedback to PCAB, Power Point, April 14, 2021](#). Once informed by school leaders and PCAB, this shift to “NC” was communicated to families through emails and shared on the [City Schools website](#).

For the 2021-22 school year, the district eliminated the use of the “NC”, increased the frequency of grades per week, and mostly returned to its standard grading guidance, maintaining the adjustments for final grade composition and expectations for teacher gradebook-keeping. See [School Year 2021-22 grading guidance, July 27, 2021](#).

## **X. Next Steps**

As discussed above, over the past several years, City Schools has made consistent effort and progress in clarifying and strengthening grading and promotion and retention guidance, so that school staff, students, and parents are aligned with the district’s expectations. We will continue the practices identified above, and we will also implement additional efforts to support clarity and consistency of grading practices across our 155 schools and programs. City Schools acknowledges that there is room for improvement, and we plan to continue to build on our progress, so that students, families, teachers, and the entire community can be confident that students’ report cards reflect the grades that students have earned. In addition, City Schools will provide continued data monitoring guidance and training to support schools’ implementation of Board Policy IKA.

### **A. Further Clarifying Guidance Regarding Grading Processes**

Prior to the beginning of school year 2022-23, City Schools will make several technical clarifications in its grading processes, which will be incorporated into annual training, discussed below.

First, City Schools is implementing checks and balances so that no single school staff person is solely responsible for any aspect of the grading entry or review process. In addition, City Schools will clarify to schools that grade reporters must be certified instructional employees.

Second, City Schools will clarify rounding processes, explicitly stating: if the percentage decimal tenths place value is 5 or greater, the grade will be rounded up, and if the percentage decimal tenths place is 4 or below, the grade will be rounded down. For example, when 59.8% is rounded to 60%, it is rounded up; and when 59.3% is rounded to 59% it is said to be rounded down. Infinite Campus, our student information system, automatically calculates final grades and rounds according to the rules described above.

Third, the grade change process now utilizes a technology platform, which permits better tracking and monitoring, as well as a historical grade auditing process. City Schools will migrate all grade changing processes away from paper-based processes to utilize online systems to ensure integrity, consistency, and accountability.

Fourth, City Schools will provide more robust data monitoring centrally and systematize the role that Instructional Leadership Executive Directors and the Schools Office plays in monitoring,

reporting and enforcement of Board Policy IKA, as well as the accompanying administrative regulation, guidance, and protocols, to ensure accountability.

## **B. Enhanced Summer Training for City Schools Staff**

Prior to the beginning of school year 2022-23, City Schools district staff will provide enhanced summer training to ground school-based staff in Board Policy IKA and its accompanying administrative regulation. Training will provide participants with guidance on grading protocols, key areas of implementation, and expectations to ensure clarity and equity of practice.

On August 17-18, 2022, at the annual CEO Institute, principals and their leadership teams will receive training on Board Policy IKA, as well as the accompanying administrative regulation, guidance, and protocols. In this training we will:

1. Review and clarify Board Policy IKA
2. Train staff on how to use the grade data cleansing report
3. Review City Schools' grade change process and required documentation
4. Review how teacher grades books are used and monitored
5. Share a plan that includes specific dates for when school leaders or their designees will monitor teacher grade books throughout the school year

Additionally, to ensure that the grading message is consistent, the Academic Office will provide a video and accompanying presentation for school leaders to conduct training with their school communities in late August 2022, regarding Board Policy IKA, as well as the accompanying administrative regulation, guidance, and protocols. This training will include:

1. Clarity on Board Policy IKA, as well as the accompanying administrative regulation, guidance, and protocols
2. Review of how grade books are used and will be monitored

Finally, we will continue to provide district-led trainings for school-based grade reporters.

## **C. Communications Strategy**

City Schools is committed to providing transparent and pertinent grading communication to all stakeholders. To that end, the district will:

1. Continue to share the school-specific grading policy expectations in alignment with the district's grading policy and regulation expectations to all stakeholders.
2. Update the district's website with:
  - a. a newly created document entitled "School Year 2022-23 Grading Manual"
  - b. a "Frequently Asked Questions" document to offer clarity on the district's and school-specific grading policies
  - c. regular updates that encourage parental involvement
3. Provide schools with quarterly communication on grading information

Additionally, each school will share their school-specific grading policy with teachers on or before August 26 and with their families at back-to-school night or by September 9.

#### **D. Data Analysis**

City Schools will continue to build on its robust monitoring of Board Policy IKA, as well as the accompanying administrative regulation and guidance.

Specifically, district office staff will take the following steps over the course of school year 2022-23:

1. Review historical grade change request(s) to identify trends and areas for support
2. Review Missing Grades Reports in collaboration with the Office of Achievement and Accountability and the Schools Office
3. Partner with grade reporters and the Office of Information Technology to review grade changes for school year 2021-22
4. Conduct a reassessment analysis to see how schools are giving students multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning, per Policy IKA.
5. City Schools' grading workgroup meets routinely to support record-keeping practices and provide strategic recommendations for improving overall assessment and grading practice.

#### **E. Performance Review for Grading Practices During School Year 2022-23**

City Schools welcomes the opportunity to contract with an external entity to ensure we maintain our path of continuous improvement. City Schools will focus this additional layer of review on grading practices during school year 2022-23. That is the first school year after the main thrust of the COVID pandemic, offering current data in a hopefully near-normal school environment.

#### **F. Long-term-Plan (next 2 - 5 years)**

City Schools has established many foundational practices of communication and training that we can build upon to strengthen our grading work. We will continue to clarify our policies and regulations, provide meaningful supports at the district level, and monitor policy implementation at the school level. We appreciate MSDE's partnership in supporting our efforts moving forward.