



# ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

## GRADE CHANGE AUTHORIZATION AND APPEALS

5116

Procedure No.

August 20, 2019

Date

- I. **PURPOSE:** To provide guidance in the implementation of the grade change authorization and appeals process to be used in all schools.
- II. **POLICY:** The Board of Education believes that all students can learn and achieve at high levels, that rigorous performance standards and achievement standards are essential components of developing and delivering quality instruction, and that regular assessment is an important component of an effective teaching and learning environment and an important tool in measuring students' learning (Board Policy 5121).
- III. **BACKGROUND:** As directed by COMAR (Code of Maryland Regulations) 13A.03.02.08, each local school system shall develop a written policy on grading and reporting. This policy will serve to provide direction specifically for the grade change authorization and grade appeal process related to the school district's written grading policy.

Principals, or their designees, under the guidance of district personnel, are responsible for ensuring that grading and reporting policies are applied consistently within their school. A clear procedure to address the process for grade changes must be defined, implemented and strictly adhered to.

Principals, or their designees, are required to participate in related annual training; review this procedure with all instructional staff; and identify grade manager, transcript manager, Student Intervention Team Chairperson, and other designees to complete all related tasks in order to ensure implementation with fidelity.

#### IV. **DEFINITIONS:**

- A. **Appeal** - Process initiated by a parent, guardian, student over 18 years old, or staff member within five school days after the release of a quarter or final report card using the Grade Appeal Form to request a grade change.
- B. **Assigned Teacher** - Teacher of record for a course in question during the specified time period as assigned in the electronic student information system (SchoolMAX). A co-teacher assigned to the course also qualifies as an assigned teacher.
- C. **Evidence** - Information including but not limited to student work, SchoolMAX reports, emails and other forms of communication and written statements that are provided to or by the principal, Student Intervention Team (SIT), parent, student and/or assigned teacher to assist in reviewing the necessity for a grade change. Evidence must be printed and filed along with the Grade Change Authorization Form



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- (PS -140) in the student cumulative folder by the principal's designee and uploaded when an electronic PS-140 is processed.
- D. Final Grade - Grade calculated based on average quarter grades and course assigned term code (quarter, semester and full year). This is the grade that appears on the student's official transcript.
  - E. Grade Appeal Form - Document on which a grade change may be requested within five days of the release of the report card.
  - F. Grade Appeal Meeting - Process utilized by the Student Intervention Team to determine the outcome of a dispute related to assigned grades.
  - G. Grade Change - Changes in SchoolMAX to an existing quarter and/or final grade after the close of the grade publishing window per the approval process.
  - H. Grade Point Average (GPA) - The total number of grade points received over a given period divided by the total number of credits awarded. See Administrative Procedures 5121.1 (elementary schools), 5121.2 (middle schools) and 5121.3 (high schools).
  - I. Grade Publishing Window - The time period prior to the end of each quarter where teachers are responsible for entering and publishing grades per the annual schedule.
  - J. Grade Change Window - The time period after the close of the grade publishing window where principals, teachers and/or SIT chairs are able to process a grade change request using the PS-140 and, if approved, SchoolMAX. Parents/guardians, students over 18 years of age, and staff are also able to submit appeals for grade changes during the first five days of this time using the Grade Appeal Form.
  - K. Grade Manager - Assigned school-based personnel responsible for changing quarter and final grades in the SchoolMAX grades module. A central office grade manager is assigned for select cases.
  - L. Grade Override – A change to the grade that occurs after the marking period ends but before the grading publishing window closes. The grade resulting from the change shall be called the “new grade.” The grade initially recorded but later changed shall be called the “old grade.”
  - M. PS-140 - Electronic Form completed by approved school staff for any grade change requested after the closing of the grade publishing window and in accordance with



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- N. Quarter Grade - Grade assigned to a student at the end of a nine week marking period.
- O. SchoolMAX - the Student Information System used in Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) to manage student data, including grades, attendance, and schedules.
- P. Student Intervention Team (SIT) - School staff who meet to help a teacher(s) identify and implement appropriate interventions for students who need support so that they are ready and able to learn, as well as students who are in need of support for acceleration. The SIT also serves as a Grade Appeals Committee. For purposes of the grade change process, the principal is not a member of the SIT Grade Appeals Committee. Members include:
  - 1. General Educator(s)
  - 2. Professional School Counselor(s)
  - 3. Administrator(s)
  - 4. School-based Specialist(s) (e.g. Reading Specialist, Math Specialist, Special Area/Elective Subject Teachers)
  - 5. School Nurse
  - 6. Other staff as appropriate
- N. Transcript Manager - Assigned school-based staff member responsible for changing transcript grades (i.e. final grades) in the SchoolMAX transcript module. A central office transcript manager is assigned for select cases.

### V. GENERAL PROVISIONS:

- A. A classroom teacher's grade must be clearly defensible and nothing will be construed to prevent a principal or other local school administrator from discussing the grade of a student with a classroom teacher. Any grade change made after the grade publishing window must be done following the grade change process defined in this administrative procedure and the PS-140 must indicate the person responsible for making the request and the person responsible for approving the grade change.
- B. No classroom teacher will be required by the Board of Education, Chief Executive Officer, or any local school administrator or other staff member to change the grade of a student. No classroom teacher will be disciplined by the Board of Education, CEO, or any local school administrator or other staff member for not changing a



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grade of a student. This protection will not apply, however, when a teacher has failed to comply with grading policies or procedures adopted by the local board of education that are applicable to the grading process, unless such policy or procedure would require a student be given a grade different than the actual grade achieved.

### VI. PROCEDURES FOR AUTHORIZED GRADE OVERRIDES AND GRADE CHANGES:

#### A. Grade Entry

1. All students in an assigned teacher's course must receive a grade during the end of the quarter grade publishing window if enrolled 21 or more days in the course per Administrative Procedures 5121.1, 5121.2 and 5121.3 - Grading and Reporting for Elementary, Middle, and High School.
2. Principals, or their designees including but not limited to the grade manager and other administrative personnel, are responsible for confirming that all grades are submitted prior to the closing of the grade publishing window.
3. The process for grade entry for transfer students can be found in Administrative Procedures 5121.1, 5121.2 and 5121.3 - Grading and Reporting for Elementary, Middle, and High School.

#### B. Grade Overrides

1. In the event a student's quarter grade needs to be adjusted, a teacher may override the calculated grade if:
  - a. The teacher has complied with grading and reporting procedures; and
  - b. The new grade more accurately reflects the student's performance during the grading period than does the old grade; and
  - c. The teacher can support the change by producing upon request sufficient documentation to show the new grade more accurately reflects the student's performance than the old grade.

The teacher is required to retain and make available for inspection any and all documents and/or materials that the teacher contends support the grade override.



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2. Grade overrides may not be used to mitigate the result of a teacher's failure to comply with grading and/or reporting procedures and/or a teacher's failure to comply with grade change procedures.

### C. Grade Changes

1. All approved grade changes on the PS-140 must be completed in SchoolMAX prior to the closing of the grade change window for the prior quarter. Requesting, approving and completing grade change requests outside of this timeline will require action by the Instructional Director.
2. When a request is approved by the principal or instructional director, notification and documentation are sent to the school grade manager.
3. If a grade change is required, the grade manager will be responsible for adjusting in the grades module accordingly. Grade managers must also go to the Grade Summary Information page and check the boxes for the affected GPAs (Quarter, Year to Date and End of Year) and then click the Recalc button to recalculate them.
4. If a grade change involves a final grade change, the grade manager will forward the PS-140 to the transcript manager who will be responsible for adjusting in the transcript module accordingly. The new grade recorded on the transcript will be initialed and dated by the principal. Transcript managers must also go to the Grade Summary Information page and check the boxes for the affected GPAs (Quarter, Year to Date and End of Year) and then click the Recalc button to recalculate them.
5. At the conclusion of a grade appeal or grade change process, all related documents - Grade Appeal Form, PS-140, evidence – with signatures and decision must be filed in the student cumulative folder. In the case where a grade change is approved, the original grade on the report card and/or transcript and the replacement grade on the report card and/or transcript must each be initialed and dated by the principal and filed.
6. The PS-140 and SchoolMAX grade change reports must be reconciled quarterly by the principal and designees to ensure that documentation is in place for each SchoolMAX entry and to justify any deviation.

### D. Grade Change Appeals Process

Grade change appeals may be initiated by the parent/guardian or student over the age of 18; the Student Intervention Team (SIT) Chairperson; the teacher of record; the principal; or administrative staff. The requirements for the respective appeals are as



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follows.

### 1. **Parent, Guardian, or Student over the age of 18 Initiated Appeals**

#### a. Grade Appeal Window

- (1) Report card quarter or final grades may be appealed for students in grades K-12.
- (2) Notification will be posted on the systemic calendar posted on the PGCPS website informing parents of the timeline for filing grade appeals at the end of grading period.
- (3) The parent, guardian, or student must initiate grade appeals within 5 school days of the release of report cards.

#### b. Grounds for Appeal

Grade changes may only be initiated for the following reasons. In each case, proper documentation must be provided and attached to the Grade Appeal Form (Attachment A) and then to the PS-140 to support the request.

- (1) Completion of make-up work. A copy of the completed make-up work must be scanned and attached to the PS-140;
- (2) Error in grade entry or calculation in the teacher gradebook;
- (3) Lawful absences as defined in COMAR and Administrative Procedure 5113 Student Attendance, Absence, and Truancy; or
- (4) Failure to provide allowable accommodations, supplemental aid or services in accordance with a student's IEP or 504 plan.

#### c. Grade overrides during an active grade publishing window, progress reports, and transfer student grades are not eligible for the grade change process. In these cases, the school principal may oversee a process by which documentation is generated and filed in the student's cumulative folder.

#### d. The parent, guardian, or student must submit a Grade Appeal Form to the teacher and principal identifying the reason for appeal with supporting evidence.



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- e. Appeals that lack evidence supporting the concern will be denied. Evidence includes, but is not limited to:
- (1) Written communication
  - (2) Student work
  - (3) SchoolMAX reports
- f. The teacher must respond to the request for appeal within two school days. If the teacher is in agreement, he or she is required to communicate with the principal the intent to initiate a grade change using the PS-140 and attaching the Grade Appeal Form and evidence. A SIT Appeals Committee is not required if the teacher agrees with the parent and submits a PS-140 prior to the grade change window.
- g. If the teacher is not in agreement with the rationale for the request, he or she must provide a reason and evidence to the principal, parent and SIT Chairperson by responding on the Grade Appeal Form within two days. The parent may request that the principal continue the appeal to the SIT Appeals Committee.
- h. If the teacher has not responded within two days of the initial appeal, the principal will forward the Grade Appeal Form to the SIT Appeals Committee and all evidence to the SIT Chairperson. The principal may not participate as part of the SIT Appeals Committee.
- i. The SIT Chairperson will convene the SIT committee for grade appeals to weigh the evidence provided by all parties as well as evidence collected during the process of investigation.
- j. The SIT Chairperson must maintain a list of participants and their signatures for grade appeals. At the conclusion, the justification of the decision must be submitted in writing with signatures on the Grade Appeal Form, and all associated evidence for filing in the student's cumulative folder.
- k. The SIT Appeals Committee will render a decision regarding the concern no later than four school days prior to the close of the grade change window and communicate with the principal, parent and teacher.
- l. If the SIT Appeals Committee denies the request for grade change, the parent may request that the principal continue the appeal to the Instructional Director. This must be done within 3 school days of receiving the decision



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from the SIT Appeals Committee.

An appeal denied by the Instructional Director may be petitioned within five school days each to the Associate Superintendent, then Chief of School Leadership and Support, and finally to the Office of Appeals.

- m. If the SIT Appeals Committee approves the request for a grade change, the SIT Chairperson will initiate the change using the electronic PS-140 prior to the closing of the grade change window.
- n. The principal will be responsible for approving grade change requests entered in the PS-140 by the SIT Chairperson and ensuring that all forms and evidence are forwarded for grade manager processing and filing in the student's cumulative folder.
- o. The PS-140 will forward approved final grade changes to the transcript manager for action.

### **2. SIT Chairperson Initiated Grade Changes**

- a. Grade change requests by the SIT Chairperson must only occur as a result of the outcome of a SIT grade appeal.
- b. SIT Grade Appeal meetings will occur at least once a quarter, if the need arises, and will be held no later than four school days prior to the close of the grade change window.
- c. The principal may not be a participant in the SIT grade appeal meeting.
- d. Grade changes initiated by the SIT chairperson must be processed using the electronic PS-140 no later than four school days prior to the close of the identified grade change window. If the teacher did not provide input during the initial appeal, the SIT chairperson will check "teacher failed to provide input" on the PS-140.
- e. The SIT Chairperson must provide an explanation for the requested change along with evidence from the original appeal and supporting grade change documents to support the grade change.
- f. The principal must approve, deny, or require additional information to support the request for a grade change prior to the close of the grade change window.



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If approving, he or she must forward the approved PS-140 to the grade manager for entering in SchoolMAX.

- g. An appeal denied by the principal may be appealed to the Instructional Director within three school days.

The Instructional Director's decision may be petitioned within five school days each to the Associate Superintendent, then Chief of School Leadership and Support, and finally to the Office of Appeals.

### 3. Assigned Teacher Initiated Grade Changes

- a. Assigned teachers must use the applicable PS-140 in order to initiate grade change requests after the end of the grade-publishing window.
- b. The teacher must provide an explanation for the requested change along with evidence attached to the PS-140.
- c. The principal must approve, deny, or require additional information to support the request for a grade change in the PS-140 prior to the close of the grade change window. If approved, the principal must forward the approved PS-140 to the grade manager for entry. If additional information is required or the request is denied, the principal must return the PS-140 to the teacher with a reason indicated.
- d. An appeal denied by the principal may be appealed to the Instructional Director within three school days.

The Instructional Director's decision may be petitioned within five school days each to the Associate Superintendent, then Chief of School Leadership and Support, and finally to the Office of Appeals.

### 4. Principal Facilitated Grade Changes

- a. If a grade change needs to be initiated outside of the grade change window, the principal must request action by the Instructional Director.
- b. The instructional director must use the electronic PS-140 in order initiate a grade change.



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- c. The principal must provide an explanation for the requested change, reason for initiating outside of the grade change window, and evidence to support the grade change request.
- d. The teacher must be asked to respond to the PS-140 to indicate whether he or she is in agreement or not in agreement with the findings. Teacher disagreement will not supersede the decision of the instructional director. Failure to respond within 48 hours will not delay the processes of approval or filing. If the teacher did not provide input, the instructional director will check “teacher failed to provide input” on the PS-140.
- e. The Instructional Director must forward the PS-140 to the Associate Superintendent to approve, deny, or require additional information to support the principal request for a grade change in the PS-140.
- f. If the request is approved, the instructional director must forward the approved PS-140 to the grade manager for entry in the SchoolMAX system. All evidence must be filed with the PS-140 in the student cumulative folder.
- g. If a grade change involves a final grade, the PS-140 will forward notification to the transcript manager who will be responsible for adjusting the transcript accordingly.
- h. If the request is denied, the ID must provide justification to the principal who will notify the person making the request. The Instructional Director’s decision may be petitioned within five school days each to the Associate Superintendent, then Chief of School Leadership and Support, and finally to the Office of Appeals.

#### **5. Dual Enrollment Grade Changes**

- a. Due to the misalignment of quarter and semester grading systems for PGCPS and dual enrollment colleges/universities, schools will need to place a grade of UC for the quarters where there are no grades received from the college/university at the time that PGCPS grades are due. See Administrative Procedure 5121.3 Grading and Reporting High School.
- b. Once final grades have been received from the college/university the school should enter the letter grade received from the college/university into the appropriate quarter. Fall Semester = quarter 2; Spring Semester = quarter 4.



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- c. For students who receive grades after the grading window or who have grade changes at their college/university, a Dual Enrollment Grade Changes Exception Notice must be completed and attached to the copy of the official transcript from the college/university. Both documents (the notice and transcript) must be placed in the student's cumulative folder.

### 6. Administrative Personnel Initiated Grade Appeals

Appeals submitted by administrative personnel must be submitted to the SIT committee. Teachers must be notified of the grade appeal request made to the SIT committee. The same appeal process as those initiated by parents, guardians, or students above the age of 18 will be followed.

### 7. Multiple Students Appeals

Appeals for multiple students in the same class require the completion of the Grade Appeal Form for each student. If approved, evidence must accompany the PS-140 in each student's cumulative folder.

### 8. 4th Quarter and Summer Grade Appeals

Fourth quarter and summer grade appeals must be submitted by the fifth school day of the next (new) school year.

Parents may present the Grade Appeal Form and supporting documentation at any time between the end of the fourth quarter and the fifth school day of the new school year. Staff may initiate an electronic PS-140 at any time between the first professional duty day and the fifth school day of the next school year. Principals may initiate an electronic PS-140 at any time from the end of the fourth quarter through the fifth school day of the next school year.

If a grade change is approved, the change in SchoolMAX will take place after the start of the new school year in order to ensure that all policies and procedures are followed.

- a. All grade changes must be submitted by the grade change deadline.
- b. For students in grade 12, the principal will review all grades after the grading window is closed. If the principal finds evidence that a 4<sup>th</sup> quarter grade was submitted that is not aligned with the grade submitted during the progress report period and evidence from monitoring the required number of grades per



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week does not support the grade submitted by the teacher, the principal may make a request to the Instructional Director to authorize a grade change. If approved, the principal must then complete the PS-140 for final approval by the Instructional Director.

- c. Summer grade appeals for credit recovery and original credit courses are to be submitted to the summer principal for review of the evidence and processing.

9. **The International High School** follows the grade change process available through the handbook.

## VII. MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE

In an effort to ensure that the grade change authorization and appeals process is implemented, the following monitoring tools and processes will be utilized annually.

- A. The principal will facilitate a training for all school staff with grading responsibilities to review the grade change authorization and appeals administrative procedure by September 30<sup>th</sup> of each school year. A record containing staff signatures to signify completion of this task will be kept on file in the principal's office for four (4) years and provided as a part of the monitoring process upon request.
- B. All designated staff members (i.e. Grade Manager, Transcript Manager, Principal, SIT Chair, Instructional Directors) will participate in an annual training of the grade management and grade change process. Principals will be required to identify their school-based designees to their Instructional Directors no later than the third Monday in August annually.
- C. Grade managers and transcript managers must reconcile school PS-140 and SchoolMAX reports quarterly and ensure that all documents have been filed accurately.
- D. Monitoring and Accountability staff will utilize PS-140, SchoolMAX and other tools to generate quarterly reports, and forward a report to the Chief Accountability Officer, Chief of School Leadership and Support, Chief of Student Services and Special Education, and Chief Academic Officer no later than five school days after the deadline for quarterly grade changes. Reports will include a master report of all PS-140 grade change requests, a reconciliation report of PS-140 data to SchoolMAX data for use with cumulative folder audits, trend data, and data summary grade changes.
- E. The Division of Special Education and Student Services will manage an annual audit of student cumulative folders in elementary school, middle school and high school to ensure compliance with the grade change authorization and appeals administrative procedures.



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Findings from the audit will be shared with Area Offices to determine next steps and ways to support schools to ensure full compliance with the grade change authorization and appeals process.

### VII. **RELATED PROCEDURES:**

Administrative Procedure 5111.2 Admission of Students from Non-Approved or Non-Accredited school grades 9 to 12;

Administrative Procedure 5113, Student Attendance, Absence, and Truancy;

Administrative Procedure 5121.1, Grading and Reporting for Elementary Schools, Early Childhood Through Grade Five;

Administrative Procedure 5121.2, Grading and Reporting for Middle Schools, Grade Six Through Grade Eight;

Administrative Procedure 5121.3, Grading and Reporting for High Schools, Grade Nine Through Grade Twelve; and

Administrative Procedure 5125 Individual Student School-Based Records

IX. **LEGAL REFERENCE:** Maryland Annotated Code, Education Article, §7-301 and 7-302; COMAR (Code of Maryland Regulations) 13A.03.02.08

X. **MAINTENANCE AND UPDATE OF THESE PROCEDURES:** The Divisions of Academics will be responsible for updating these procedures as needed.

XI. **CANCELLATIONS AND SUPERSEDURES:** This Administrative Procedures cancels and supersedes Administrative Procedure 5116 dated July 1, 2018.

XII. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** August 20, 2019

Attachments:

Grade Appeal Form

Dual Enrollment Grade Change Exception Notice

Distribution: Lists 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10 and 11