

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
Rockville, Maryland

March 23, 2021

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Patricia B. O'Neill, Chair, Board of Education Policy Management Committee

Subject: Final Action, Board Policy IQD, Academic Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities

On November 10, 2020, the Montgomery County Board of Education tentatively adopted revised draft Policy IQD, *Academic Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities* (Resolution No. 493-20). The tentatively adopted policy was distributed for public comment from November 12, 2020, until February 12, 2021. After review of the public comments on February 25, 2021, the Board of Education Policy Management Committee (Committee) recommends the "Committee Recommended Draft" that will be discussed by the full Board today.

The Committee Recommended Draft is included as Attachment A, a Summary of Public Comments is included as Attachment B, the public comments are included as Attachment C, and the July 11, 2019, resolution requesting that the Committee review Board Policy IQD, *Academic Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities*, (Resolution No. 446-19), is included as Attachment D.

The Committee now is recommending that the proposed amendments to Board Policy IQD, *Academic Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities*, be approved.

The following resolution is provided for your consideration:

WHEREAS, A July 11, 2019, resolution requesting that the Board's Policy Management Committee review Board Policy IQD, *Academic Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities*, and consider bringing forward a recommendation the Board of Education (Resolution No. 446-19); and

WHEREAS, Policy IQD, *Academic Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities*, encourages student engagement in school through a variety of extracurricular activities including, but not limited to, interscholastic sports, student government, fine arts, academic teams, and other group activities as an essential part of a complete educational experience; and

WHEREAS, Policy IQD, *Academic Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities*, reaffirms the commitment of the Montgomery County Board of Education to providing an array of extracurricular opportunities, with and without academic eligibility requirements; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Education seeks to balance state and collegiate expectations for academic attainment for interscholastic athletes while also setting forth academic eligibility requirements that are supportive of broad student engagement; and

WHEREAS, Policy IQD, *Academic Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities*, sets forth academic eligibility requirements for students participating in interscholastic sports, with certain exemptions from these requirements for middle school students in the first marking period of their first year of middle school, and for high school students in the first three marking periods of their first year of high school; and

WHEREAS, Draft Policy IQD, *Academic Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities*, was reviewed by the Policy Management Committee on February 18, 2020, and February 25, 2021; and

WHEREAS, Policy IQD, *Academic Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities*, tentatively was adopted by the Board of Education on November 10, 2020, (Resolution No. 493-20), and sent out for public comment; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Education has received comments from the public and the Policy Management Committee's recommendations; now therefore be it

Resolved, That the Board of Education adopt Policy IQD, *Academic Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities*, as updated in the attached Committee Recommended Draft.

PBO:sd

Attachments

Committee Recommended Draft
3/23/21
IQD

1 Related Entries: **ACA, IQA-RA, IQB-RA, IQD-RA, IQD-RB**
2 Responsible Office: ~~Deputy Superintendent of Schools~~ **Chief of**
3 **Teaching, Learning, and Schools**
4 **Chief of Engagement, Innovations, and**
5 **Operations** ~~Operating Officer~~

6
7
8 ~~Academic Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities~~

9
10
11 A. PURPOSE

- 12
13 **1.** To articulate the Board of Education's ~~(Board)~~
14 commitment to providing an array of extracurricular
15 opportunities, **including interscholastic sports**, for
16 students.
- 17
18 **2.** **To encourage student engagement in school through** ~~Having~~
19 a variety of extracurricular ~~options~~ **activities, with and**
20 **without academic eligibility requirements**, including,
21 but not limited to, ~~cultural~~ ~~arts,~~
22 ~~athletics~~ **interscholastic sports, student government,**
23 **fine arts, academic teams,** and other ~~team~~ ~~group~~
24 activities ~~is~~ ~~as~~ an essential part of a complete
25 educational experience
- 26
27 **3.** **To identify extracurricular activities with academic**
28 **eligibility requirements**

Committee Recommended Draft
3/23/21
IQD

29

30 B. ISSUE

31

32 1. Research has shown that participation in extra-
33 curricular activities -

34

35 a) leads to improved academic performance;

36 b) enhances persistence to graduation;

37 c) supports students as they explore interests and
38 create broader perspectives;

39 d) promotes higher self-esteem; and

40 e) teaches essential life skills.

41

42 2. Extracurricular activities, including interscholastic
43 sports, are a valuable part of the entire education of
44 each student and are often cited among the key factors
45 to helping students stay engaged in school along with a
46 friendly and supportive staff, positive peer
47 relationships, and the ability to understand the work.
48 Extra-curricular activities help students build
49 relationships, obtain assistance with homework, learn
50 how to navigate the school and community cultures, and
51 enhance a sense of belonging to their school community.

52

53 3. Participation in extra-curricular activities has also
54 been shown to result in improved school attendance.
55 Positively interacting with peers and adults outside the
56 classroom, such as in after-school clubs and

Committee Recommended Draft
3/23/21
IQD

57 interscholastic sports, facilitate building the
58 relationships vital to a student's emotional, social,
59 and intellectual development and overall school success.
60

61 C. POSITION

62 ~~3.~~

63 1. The Board supports having both extracurricular
64 activities requiring academic eligibility and
65 extracurricular activities predicated upon open
66 enrollment.
67

68 2. The Board recognizes that participation in
69 extracurricular activities should be maintained and
70 supported by academic standards but does not desire to
71 impede a student's participation in an activity that
72 could be the key to their continued engagement in school.
73

74
75 ~~2-3.~~ The Board seeks to balance the state and collegiate
76 expectations with its interest in making extracurricular
77 activities, including interscholastic sports,
78 accessible to as many students as possible; hence, the
79 Board sets forth below academic eligibility requirements
80 that are supportive of broad student engagement. ~~-~~

81 ~~Extracurricular activities are a valuable part of the~~
82 ~~entire education of each student. However,~~
83 ~~participation in extracurricular activities should be~~
84 ~~maintained and supported by academic standards.~~

Committee Recommended Draft
3/23/21
IQD

85
86
87 a) Academic eligibility standards for ~~middle and high~~
88 ~~school~~ participation in **athletic** ~~extra-curricular~~
89 activities **are necessary to prepare students for**
90 **participation in athletic competitions at the**
91 **state-wide level and to prepare them to meet the**
92 **academic eligibility standards requirements at the**
93 **collegiate level, should they desire to pursue**
94 **sports beyond high school; therefore, academic**
95 **eligibility standards** ~~.listed as stipend-~~
96 ~~compensated activities in the negotiated Agreement~~
97 ~~Between Montgomery County Education Association and~~
98 ~~the Montgomery County Board of Education (hereafter~~
99 ~~referred to as the Agreement)~~ must be established
100 and communicated.

101
102 b) Decisions regarding a student's academic
103 eligibility for participation in **interscholastic**
104 **sports, as listed in the MCPS Middle School**
105 **Athletic Handbook and the MCPS High School Athletic**
106 **Handbook** ~~extra-curricular activities~~ will be made as
107 follows:

108
109 (1) Students in middle and high schools must
110 maintain a 2.0 average with no more than one
111 failing grade in the previous marking period
112 to be eligible to participate in
113 **interscholastic sports.** ~~any activity listed as~~

Committee Recommended Draft
3/23/21
IQD

114 a ~~stipend-compensated activity in the~~
115 ~~Agreement.~~

116 (2) **For middle school students, this requirement**
117 **becomes effective as of the start of the**
118 **second marking period of their first year in**
119 **middle school.**

120
121 (3) **For high school students, this requirement**
122 **becomes effective as of their second year in**
123 **any high school as initially determined by**
124 **their marking period average in the fourth**
125 **quarter of their first year of high school.**

126
127 (4) **The academic eligibility requirement** ~~This does~~
128 ~~not apply to students in the fall entering~~
129 ~~middle or high school for the first time or to~~
130 ~~students engaged in activities that are~~
131 ~~extensions of a graded course.~~

132
133 c) It is the obligation of the ~~school system~~**district**
134 to make supports for maintaining academic
135 performance and academic eligibility available to
136 students.

137
138 d) Students in middle school who are not academically
139 eligible may petition to be reinstated in an
140 activity if they have shown evidence of progress
141 toward meeting eligibility standards. Middle

Committee Recommended Draft

3/23/21

IQD

142 school principals will make final decisions
143 regarding these petitions.
144

145 D. DESIRED OUTCOMES

146
147 Each student should maintain high academic standards while
148 also pursuing extracurricular activities that contribute to
149 a well-rounded education.
150

151 E. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

152
153 1. All middle and high schools should provide and
154 communicate opportunities for all students to
155 participate in extracurricular activities. ~~by ensuring~~
156 ~~that there are a range of possibilities, including~~
157 ~~extracurricular activities with open enrollment that do~~
158 ~~not require academic eligibility.~~
159

160 2. Schools should help students retain or regain **academic**
161 ~~eligibility for all extracurricular activities requiring~~
162 ~~academic eligibility~~ by providing and referring students
163 to such support activities as **intervention plans,**
164 contracts, tutoring programs, mentoring and monitoring
165 programs, academic support classes and counseling, study
166 halls during or after school, outreach programs and/or
167 other programs.
168

169 3. Schools should share best practices that increase

Committee Recommended Draft
3/23/21
IQD

170 student academic eligibility for **athletic**
171 ~~extracurricular~~ activities.
172

173 4. Schools should develop mechanisms to evaluate the
174 effectiveness of support programs.
175

176 5. The superintendent **of schools** will publish regulations
177 to implement this policy as needed.
178

179 F. REVIEW AND REPORTING
180

181 1. The superintendent **of schools** will report annually to
182 the Board on high school academic ineligibility rates
183 disaggregated by grade level, race/ethnicity, gender,
184 and receipt of special services in the Annual Report.
185

186 2. This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the Board
187 of Education review process.
188

189
190 *Policy History:* Adopted by Resolution No. 69790, November 13,
191 1990; reformatted December 1996; amended by Resolution No. 37-05,
192 February 14, 2006; amended by Resolution 239-11, May 10, 2011;
193 **amended by Resolution _____**.
194

195 *Note previous policy history:* Adopted by Resolution No. 28586,
196 May 13, 1986; reformatted in accordance with Resolution 45886,
197 August 12, 1986; rescinded by Resolution No. 69790; November 13,

Committee Recommended Draft
3/23/21
IQD

198 1990

**Summary of Comments Received on
Draft Board Policy IQD, *Academic Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities*
November 11, 2020 to February 12, 2021**

9 Comments Received (note that commenters could identify as any combination of the following):

6 self-identified as a MCPS Parent/Guardian

2 self-identified as a MCPS staff member

4 self-identified as a Montgomery County community member

1 comment was posted for another policy but contained content for Policy IQD

Topics addressed in comments:

- Standards should not preclude students to have opportunities for extracurricular activities as an opportunity for school involvement and “a healthy distraction from their stressful lives.”
 - Students who struggle academically do better when they are permitted to remain involved in team sports.
 - Extracurricular activities may be the only arena in which they experience success and self-worth.
- Standards for participation should be higher so that students learn consequences for not doing well in school.
 - Eligibility rules should apply starting in grade 9.
 - Students should be provided additional counseling and support in middle school so they are ready for success in high school.
- Academic eligibility requirements after resumption of in person instruction [after COVID] should be given special consideration.
- The policy may have implications for NCAA scholarship eligibility.

Policy IQD, Academic Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities - Public Comments

Entry Id	Name	Last	You are? (Check All That Apply)*	Comment on amendments to Board Policy IQD. (Please see previous screen for link to policy)
1	Andrea	Hesse	MCPS Parent/Guardian	I understand the Board's position on this issue. However, those students who come from low-income backgrounds balance their school work, often jobs outside of school to help their families, as well as family responsibilities, such as cooking or raising their younger siblings while parents work. With their full plates already, their grades might suffer. If they are involved in extracurricular activities and that is their only opportunity for school involvement or serves as a healthy distraction from their stressful lives, why would we take that away? When we think about the audit being conducted by MCPS, I would want to know many black and brown children are not doing well in school and involved in sports or other extracurricular activities. We have to consider the privilege most students have in only having to worry about school and extra curricular activities while other students have much more on their plate. Would this cause further inequity? Would this alienate black and brown students further? Thank you.
2	Sandra	Volpe	MCPS Parent/Guardian	I disagree with your proposal and believe standards should be higher. I'm not sure what your reasoning is for lowering them but history has shown us that lowering standards does not help these students in the long run. I have a child that borders on the 2.0 GPA and is involved in sports, he needs to know there are consequences to not doing well in school. I would think all students regardless of their race (even though moco is Uber focused on dividing the races) would be better served with setting the bar higher not lower. They will be better off academically in the long run. Most kids will do the bare minimum if they know that's all they have to do to get by.
3	Calvin	Jenkins Jr	MCPS Staff member; Montgomery County, MD, Community Member	In regards to the academic eligibility amendment, it's vital that kids understand consequences and importance of academics the moment they step through the door. Academic eligibility should apply from the 9th grade year. They need to establish good work habits as soon as they enter HS. Additionally, NCAA eligibility counts the 9th grade academic year. Kids should be held to higher standards, not lower.

Policy IQD, Academic Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities - Public Comments

Entry Id	Name	Last	You are? (Check All That Apply)*	Comment on amendments to Board Policy IQD. (Please see previous screen for link to policy)
4	Robert	Hyman	MCPS Parent/Guardian; MCPS Staff member	I think it is critical students know they need to prioritize academics over athletics and think this must start as soon as they enter high school. I do not agree with delaying this requirement until they have been in high school for a year. If they know the requirement is in place before they enter high school, I believe they will be motivated to study and do their best starting in middle school. Instead of making this change, I would advocate for providing students additional counseling and support in the middle school to help them be successful so when they enter high school, they are eligible.
5	Shannon	Sullivan	MCPS Parent/Guardian	There must always be an academic requirement to participate in all extracurricular school activities. More and more I feel this county is forgetting that the primary function of all schools is to educate all students. Participating in extracurricular activities is not a right students have, it is a reward earned by academic success. The requirements are already too low. I would rather this county focus on education. Better support your teachers. Hold students and their parents responsible for their success or failure. Under no circumstance should this county allow any one with less than a 2.0 GPA take part in any activities other than learning in schools. Cater to truly educating your students. With knowledge they can choose their own paths toward enriching their lives.
6	Samantha	Bender	Montgomery County, MD, Community Member	As both a parent in the community and a psychologist in the community who works with students who struggle academically and emotionally, I have always strongly believed that eligibility for school activities (including sports, through all 4 years of high school) should NOT be tied to or contingent on academic performance. First, there is a great deal of research highlighting that students who struggle academically perform BETTER when they are permitted to remain involved in team sports. Second, for many students and especially those who struggle academically, extracurricular activities are the only arena where they are able to experience success and self-worth. For those students, participation in their activities and sports is necessary to buffer them from the depression their academic failures cause and so, is key to their mental and therefore physical health.

Policy IQD, Academic Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities - Public Comments

Entry Id	Name	Last	You are? (Check All That Apply)*	Comment on amendments to Board Policy IQD. (Please see previous screen for link to policy)
7	Ellen	Zavian	MCPS Parent/Guardian	I am a sports attorney with 35 years of experience. Without getting into my extensive background, what MCPS is looking to do is to create an NCAA rule on scholarship eligibility. For years, minorities sued the NCAA for its requirements to participate in sports as well as arguing the SAT discriminated. I do not think the BOD should make a decision without reading the history of the NCAA and how they expanded athletic opportunities. Secondly, high school athletics is a business. While you do not think so, it is a business. The NFL, MLB, NHL and the like rely on the high school farm system to feed their pipelines, with less than 1% every making the professional level. To come at this problem with the view of 'better access' is misguided. Do not make this decision without experts, like myself, in the room. It is not a cut and dry decision of access to more.
8	Kelly	Curran	MCPS Parent/Guardian; Montgomery County, MD, Community Member	I would like to encourage the BOE to reconsider academic eligibility requirements for interscholastic sports during the first quarter after resumption of in person instruction. We know that many more students than normal are failing classes right now because online instruction is not an effective means of learning for large numbers of students. These students will be at risk of dropping out but having sports to look forward to might keep them engaged. I also do not understand why 6th graders are not allowed to participate in interscholastic sports. It seems like interscholastic sports for new middle schoolers could be an important way to keep kids healthy, physically active and engaged in school as they move from smaller and more personal elementary schools to the very large middle schools in MoCo.
[Copied from JPH, #3]	Jason	Makstein	Montgomery County, MD, Community Member	Currently community member homeschooling but will have kids in mcps again. I think the food equity stuff is a no brainer. Kids shouldn't be charged money, stigmatized or not have healthy food. For sports eligibility it is a tricky situation because there are cases where it encourages kids to participate more in school, so does being involved in extracurriculars though. I think it would make sense to allow more kids to participate as long as it doesn't negatively effect participation in school. During covid times this should be waived due to circumstances. Once things are back to normal, it should be looked at the data of how much this policy helps or hurts students further academic involvement, if kids are improving and going to class more based on having access, then it should be made more permanent [This comment is duplicated in JPH comments]

ADOPTED

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
Rockville, Maryland

July 11, 2019

MEMORANDUM

To/From: Members of the Board of Education

Subject: Referral to Policy Management Committee: Eligibility

WHEREAS, The Montgomery County Board of Education has articulated a long standing commitment to foster student engagement through rigorous and relevant curriculum, engaging instruction, a variety of programs, and an array of extracurricular activities; and

WHEREAS, Board Policy IQD, *Academic Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities*, states “[h]aving a variety of extracurricular options including, but not limited to, cultural arts, athletics, and other team activities is an essential part of a complete educational experience. The Board supports having both extracurricular activities requiring academic eligibility and extracurricular activities predicated upon open enrollment”; and

WHEREAS, Board Policy IQD, *Academic Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities*, also states “[s]chools should help students retain or regain eligibility for all extracurricular activities requiring academic eligibility by providing and referring students to such support activities as contracts, tutoring programs, mentoring and monitoring programs, academic support classes and counseling, study halls during or afterschool, outreach programs and/or other programs”; and

WHEREAS, Under Board Policy IQD, *Academic Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities*, extracurricular activities are linked to academic standards with the promise that the school system will make supports for maintaining academic performance and academic eligibility available to students. However, often students who are disengaged from school also are academically ineligible to participate in many extracurricular activities, and their inability to participate in numerous extracurricular activities can make reengagement difficult; and

WHEREAS, The Board’s Policy Management Committee is charged with reviewing policy and bring forth recommendations to the full Board of Education members; now therefore be it

Resolved, That the Board of Education requests that the Board’s Policy Management Committee review Board Policy IQD, *Academic Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities*, benchmark with similarly situated school systems, review system data on eligibility, and consider bringing forward a recommendation to the Board of Education during the 2019–2020 school.

BOE:LCW:lsh