

This e-mail message has been approved for distribution by Dr. Frieda K. Lacey, deputy superintendent of schools. No hard copy will be provided.


ACTION REQUESTED

Office of the Deputy Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

May 17, 2010

MEMORANDUM

To: High School Principals

From: Frieda K. Lacey, Deputy Superintendent of Schools 

Subject: ACTION: Elimination of Loss of Credit Practice

Summary

- The loss of credit procedure currently in place in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) high schools will be eliminated starting with the 2010–2011 school year, as discussed at the High School Principals Professional Learning Community on March 3, 2010, and recommended by the Loss of Credit Project Team.
- An implementation committee will be convened to coordinate communication plans and the sharing of successful practices, and to analyze attendance data at the end of the first semester of the 2010–2011 school year.

Background

- The loss of credit procedure was developed in 1976 to encourage attendance by preventing high school students from earning credit if they missed five or more sessions of one course during a semester due to unlawful absences. Inconsistencies in implementation and monitoring, and the disproportionate impact on specific student groups, have compelled four separate reviews of the loss of credit procedures by work groups since 1992.
- The latest review of the current loss of credit practice was conducted over an 18-month period by a multistakeholder project team comprised of teachers, administrators, central services staff, parents, and students. After a thorough review of the student achievement and attendance data, attendance policies of neighboring jurisdictions, and discussions with a wide variety of stakeholders, the project team made the following recommendations:
 1. The loss of credit practice should be eliminated starting with the 2010–2011 school year.

2. Unlawful absences should be considered disciplinary infractions that can result in nonacademic consequences as determined by the individual school's discipline committee and outlined in Regulation JFA-RA, *Student Rights and Responsibilities*. The consequences for this infraction would range from a minimum of a conference to a maximum of administrative detention. Schools should consider consequences that emphasize the importance of increasing student engagement in learning opportunities, including community service and other academic after-school learning experiences.
3. Students are expected to make up missed work regardless of the legal status of their absence in accordance with Regulation IKA-RA, *Grading and Reporting*, and the MCPS Grading and Reporting Procedures Manual. Teachers may assign an equivalent, but different task/assessment to students when they return from any absence. For unlawful absences, teachers may deny students the opportunity to earn credit for missed work or assessments in accordance with the process approved by the principal and the school leadership team.
4. Each high school will establish a formal process to promote student attendance. This process will be designed to monitor data, provide targeted interventions, and develop incentives.

Action

- The leadership teams of each high school will develop school procedures for monitoring attendance, developing targeted interventions for students with attendance issues, and to recognize and reward students for good attendance.
- Please share this information with staff members, students, parents, and your school community. A fact sheet is attached for your use.

Questions

- Contact Mr. Sean W. Bulson, acting community superintendent, Office of School Performance, Mrs. Suzanne A. Maxey, consulting principal, Leadership Development Team, or Mrs. Carol H. Blum, director, High School Instruction and Achievement, via e-mail.

FKL:csj

Attachment

Copy to:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| Executive Staff | Ms. Cuttitta |
| Mrs. Blum | Dr. Newman |
| Mrs. Maxey | Mr. Prouty |
| Loss of Credit Project Team | Ms. Romero |

[School letterhead]

**Elimination of Loss of Credit Procedures
in Grades 9–12
Fact Sheet for Parents and Students**

The loss of credit procedure currently in place in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) high schools will be eliminated starting with the 2010–2011 school year. This procedure, created in 1976, was originally designed to encourage attendance by preventing students from earning credit if they missed five or more sessions of one course during a semester due to unlawful absences. Because this procedure has become difficult to implement and monitor, and has had a disproportionate impact on specific student groups, it has been studied and reviewed several times.

The latest review of the current loss of credit procedure was conducted over an 18-month period from September 2008 to March 2010 by a multistakeholder group comprised of teachers, administrators, central services staff, parents, and students. After a thorough review of the student achievement and attendance data, attendance policies of neighboring jurisdictions, and discussions with a wide variety of stakeholders, the work group concluded the following:

- Daily attendance is crucial to student achievement and required in order to demonstrate mastery of material and receive credit for courses.
- The leadership teams of each high school will establish a process to encourage regular daily attendance, monitor attendance, and provide interventions.
- Unlawful absences will be considered discipline infractions that can result in nonacademic consequences as determined by each school's discipline committee.
- It is important for students to make up missed work regardless of the legal status of their absence. However, teachers may deny students the opportunity to earn credit for missed work or assessments in accordance with the process approved by the principal and the school's leadership team.

In accordance with these recommendations, _____ High School will closely monitor student attendance, develop targeted interventions for students with attendance issues, and recognize and reward students for good attendance.

If you have any questions, please contact [name of school contact person and phone number].