

# Middle School Academic Policy Guide



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## I. KEY SHIFTS FROM PREVIOUS YEARS – **UPDATED AUGUST 2023**

The following are new policy changes and/or flexibilities for the 2023-24 school year to create more equitable and supportive learning environments for all students. These policies are also addressed in their corresponding sections of this guide.

### Academic Intervention Services (AIS) Identification

Since students' State assessment results will not be available prior to the start of the 2023-24 school year, NYCDOE schools must use a universal screening assessment as the first step in identifying students at risk of not meeting NYSED's learning standards in English Language Arts and mathematics.

### Grading Scale

The New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) has a new four-level competency-based grading scale that has numeric equivalents. This optional grading scale will be available in STARS in September 2023.

### Medically Necessary Instruction (MNI) and Hospital Programs

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) increased the minimum instructional hours for students in MNI and hospital programs from 10 to 15 hours per week for middle and high school students (grades 6-12).

### Career and Technical Education

Computer science courses may now be used to meet the 1.75 units CTE requirement at the middle school level.

## II. ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) Commissioner’s Regulations, New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) Chancellor’s Regulations, and supplementary [academic policy resources](#) provide guidance on policies pertaining to students in middle school grades, including program requirements, assessments, grading, and promotion.

Middle schools also serving elementary and/or high school grades should refer to the [Elementary](#) and [High School](#) Academic Policy Guides for information applicable to these grade levels.

For academic policy and systems questions, schools can refer to the [academic policy](#) and [academic systems resources](#) webpages, or contact their [academic policy, performance and assessment specialists](#).

The [STARS](#) suite of applications is the NYCDOE’s official record of students’ programs, grades, and progress toward completing academic requirements.<sup>1</sup> STARS reflects academic information for all NYCDOE public school students in grades K–12. STARS data also reflects schools’ alignment to the New York State and New York City academic policies described in this guide. All middle schools must use STARS to enter information about the instruction and supports students are receiving throughout the school day; to reflect student-teacher-subject relationships; and to enter student grades. To ensure that STARS data accurately captures students’ academic programs and outcomes, middle schools must follow the procedures outlined in the [Middle School Course Code Directory](#) and on the [STARS wiki](#). STARS is managed by the NYCDOE’s Office of Academic Policy and Systems. See the section of this guide on [scheduling in STARS](#) and visit the [STARS wiki](#) for more information.

### A. Program Requirements – Updated August 2023

NYSED’s [Part 100.4](#) defines the minimum program requirements for students in middle school grades, including required units of study for grades 7 and 8. [Part 100.1](#) defines a unit of study as 180 minutes per week throughout the school year, which is the equivalent of 108 hours of instruction per year.<sup>2</sup> A unit of study is based on the amount of instructional time the student receives from a NYCDOE subject-certified teacher in a course aligned to [NYSED learning standards](#).

In 2020, NYSED amended the definition of a unit of study to allow alternative means of instruction, such as online components, to count toward the 108 hours per unit.

“Unit of study means at least 180 minutes of instruction per week throughout the school year, or the equivalent. Equivalent shall mean at least 180 minutes of instructional time per week for instruction delivered in a traditional face to face model or through alternative instructional experiences, including but not limited to through digital technology or blended learning, that represents standards-based learning under the guidance and direction of an appropriately certified teacher. Instructional experiences shall include, but not be limited to: meaningful and frequent interaction with an appropriately certified teacher; academic and other supports designed to meet the

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<sup>1</sup> The STARS Suite includes three platforms across grades K–12: STARS Classroom, STARS Client, and STARS Admin.

<sup>2</sup> Most middle schools use an annual term model. These schools maintain a consistent schedule throughout the entire school year and award final grades at the end of the year, in June. See the section of this guide on [term models](#) for more information.



needs of the individual student and instructional content that reflects consistent academic expectations as in-person instruction. Any alternative instructional experience must include meaningful feedback on-student assignments and methods of tracking student engagement.”

The sections below outline the program requirements for grades 6–8. These represent the minimum academic program that a public middle school in New York State must provide. Schools may exceed the requirements and offer supplementary experiences, including advisory, service-learning opportunities, and other youth development courses that will enhance students’ educational experiences and prepare them for the rigor of high school coursework.

It is the policy of the NYCDOE to maintain a safe and supportive learning and educational environment that is free of harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying and free of discrimination because of actual or perceived race, color, creed, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship/immigration status, religion, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, or weight.

See the [Guidelines on Gender Inclusion](#) for help implementing gender-inclusive curricula, programs, activities, and practices that are consistent with this policy and with the NYCDOE’s commitment to equity and access. Schools must be mindful that inappropriate gender segregation may result in isolating students, hindering diversity, and/or perpetuating gender stereotypes.

## 1. *Grade 6*

Schools must provide students in grade 6 instruction aligned to [NYSED intermediate-level learning standards](#) in specific departments. Principals may determine the distribution of time among these subject areas based on their academic program and student needs, with the exception of [physical education](#) and [health education](#), and, where student need is established, bilingual education and/or English as a New Language (ENL) instruction.

Schools must provide instruction to all students in the following departments:

- English language arts (ELA), including reading, writing, listening and speaking
- Social studies, including the geography and history of the Eastern Hemisphere from pre-history through the 1300s
- Mathematics
- Science and technology
- [World Languages](#)
- [Physical education](#) (PE), as described in [Part 135.4](#)
- [Health education](#), as described in [Part 135.3](#)
- [Arts education](#), including dance, music, theater, and visual arts
- [Career development and occupational studies](#)<sup>3</sup>
- Where student need is established, bilingual education and/or English as a New Language (ENL) instruction, as described in [Part 154](#)<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Middle schools often integrate the intermediate level career development and occupational studies (CDOS) [learning standards](#) into English language arts, social studies, and other departments.

<sup>4</sup> Courses previously referred to as English as a Second Language (ESL) are now referred to as English as a New Language (ENL). English as a New Language (ENL) courses that meet ELA standards may count toward students’ ELA instructional requirements. See [Part 154](#) and the [Policy and Reference Guide for MLs/ELs](#) for middle school ENL requirements.

## 2. Grades 7 and 8

In grades 7 and 8, schools must provide students with academic programs that enable them to complete specific units of study in required departments by the end of grade 8. In most cases, instructional time delivered in these departments prior to grade 7 may not count toward the required units of study.<sup>5</sup>

The table below uses units of study to define the requirements.

Grade 7 & 8 Subjects	Total required time (1 unit = equivalent of 108 hours)	Additional Information
<b>English language arts</b>	2 units	One unit in grade 7 <u>and</u> one unit in grade 8
<b>Social studies</b>	2 units	One unit in grade 7 <u>and</u> one unit in grade 8
<b>Math</b>	2 units	One unit in grade 7 <u>and</u> one unit in grade 8
<b>Science</b>	2 units	One unit in grade 7 <u>and</u> one unit in grade 8
<b>Career and Technology Education<sup>6</sup></b>	1.75 units	One and three quarter units total, across grades 7 <u>and</u> 8  CTE instruction initiated in grades 5 and/or 6 and taught by CTE certified instructors may fulfill this requirement.
<b><u>World Languages</u></b>	1 unit	One unit total, in any years prior to the end of grade 8 <sup>7</sup>
<b><u>Physical education</u></b>	1 unit	One half unit (90 minutes per week) in grade 7 <u>and</u>  One half unit (90 minutes per week) in grade 8
<b><u>Health education</u></b>	0.5 units	One half unit total, across grades 7 and 8  Health instruction provided in grade 6 may fulfill this requirement.
<b><u>Arts education</u></b>	0.5 unit in two different disciplines, for a total of 1 unit	One unit total, across grades 7 and 8

<sup>5</sup> As an exception, the health, technology, and home and career skills requirements may be delivered prior to grade 7.

<sup>6</sup> Schools unable to hire teachers certified in technology education and/or home and career skills (FACS) may meet this requirement through any Career and Technology Education (CTE) course. See the [CTE section](#) below for additional information.

<sup>7</sup> All students are required to complete two units of study prior to the end of grade 9. One of these units must be completed prior to the end of grade 8.

<b>Library and information skills</b>	One period per week in grades 7 and 8, or the equivalent <sup>8</sup>	None
<b>Career development and occupational studies</b>	School-determined	None

### 3. *Career and Technical Education (CTE) - Updated August 2023*

Middle schools are required to provide 1.75 units of Career and Technical Education. Schools may offer standalone courses to address CTE learning standards, or they may integrate CTE learning standards into other courses. Since the 2019–20 school year, all middle school students may fulfill the 1.75 units requirement by taking courses in any of the following CTE disciplines, provided that an appropriately certified CTE teacher instructs the course.<sup>9</sup> Schools may incorporate the learning standards of these disciplines into other courses.

- Agriculture
- Business and Marketing
- Computer Science (added in 2022-23)
- Family and Consumer Science/Home and Career Skills (FACS)
- Health Science
- Technology Education
- Trade and Technical Subjects

See NYSED’s website for [middle-level content modules](#) in each of the seven CTE subject areas.

### 4. *World Languages*

The Board of Regents adopted the revised New York State Learning Standards for Languages Other Than English (LOTE)/World Languages on Monday, March 15, 2021. For more information on the changes, implementation timeline, and proficiency ranges aligned to the World Language Checkpoints, see the [World Languages Standards and Guidelines](#) and the [Administrator’s Reference Guide](#).

Instruction in World Languages may begin as early as kindergarten and must begin no later than the beginning of grade 8, such that all students receive two full units of study by the end of grade 9. Courses in World Languages provided as part of a home language arts (HLA) program satisfy the World Languages requirement.<sup>10</sup> Note that schools with bilingual programs are required to offer HLA courses.

<sup>8</sup> It is recommended that library and information skills be taught by library media specialists and classroom teachers to ensure coordination and integration of library instruction with classroom instruction.

<sup>9</sup> NYSED approved an extension for CTE teachers who are certified in grades 7–12 to teach grades 5 and 6 by taking additional coursework. See [NYSED’s memo](#) for more information.

<sup>10</sup> Home language arts (HLA) is formerly known as native language arts (NLA). See the [Policy and Reference Guide for MLs/ELLs](#) for more information.



Middle schools are expected to design their World Languages programs to culminate in the NYCDOE [Second Language Proficiency](#) (SLP) exam, if offered in the language, and afford students the opportunity to earn high school credits toward graduation and continue to the next level of study. This locally-administered exam assesses proficiency of World Language [Checkpoint A learning standards](#) and can be used to award high school credit and validate students' learning experiences when taken after completing an accelerated World Language course in grade 8. Common middle school World Languages models are:

- Two years of study in World Languages in any elementary or middle school grades, culminating in the SLP exam by the end of grade 8. Students who successfully complete these courses and pass the associated SLP exam receive two high school course credits upon transfer into high school.
- One year of accelerated World Languages study in grade 8, culminating in the SLP exam at the end of grade 8. Students who successfully complete the course and pass the SLP exam receive two high school course credits. Schools using this model should code these courses using the accelerated middle school World Languages course codes.

NYCDOE World Language Comprehensive exams are aligned to [Checkpoint B learning standards](#) and designed to be completed after a full course of study (meaning, three units of study/six credits). If a school determines that students have acquired the proficiency necessary to be successful on the World Language Comprehensive exam, the school can request to administer that exam. However, successfully completing the World Language exam in middle school could affect programming decisions for these students. Schools should contact their [academic policy, performance, and assessment specialists](#) to request approval to offer a Comprehensive World Language exam in grade 8.

See the [World Languages guidance](#) for information on these policies, and for guidance on how to program World Languages courses in STARS.

## 5. *Physical Education – Updated August 2023*

[Part 135.4](#) defines the minimum requirements for physical education (PE) for students in middle school grades. Schools must provide students in grades 6–8 with an instructional physical education (PE) program, aligned to [NYSED learning standards](#) and the [NYC Grades 6-12 PE Scope and Sequence](#) for at least 90 minutes per week throughout the year, every term in middle school.<sup>11</sup> PE courses must be taught by a certified, licensed PE teacher. Only teacher-led instructional time may count toward PE. Schools may not count time spent dressing or traveling to an off-site facility toward the PE instructional time requirement.

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<sup>11</sup> The traditional PE scheduling model set by Part [135.4](#) is known as the “3/2 model,” in which students are scheduled for three days per week in one semester and two days per week in the other semester, or for a comparable time when the school uses a different term model. See the [PE](#) guidance document for more information on scheduling and term models.

## Summary of PE Time and Frequency Requirements

Grade Level	Which PE policies apply?	Minimum required time	Minimum required frequency
<b>Grade 6</b> In a K–6, K–8, K–12 school	Elementary school policies for grades 4–6	120 minutes per week	No less than 3 times per week, every term
<b>Grade 6</b> In a 6–8 or 6–12 school	Middle school policies for grades 7–8	90 minutes per week	Every term
<b>Grades 7–8</b>	Middle school policies for grades 7–8	90 minutes per week	Every term

PE programs must be designed to meet [NYSED learning standards](#) for physical education. PE courses must be taught by a certified, licensed PE teacher. Class size must follow the UFT contract. For additional information and guidance about providing students with PE, please refer to [Physical Education](#) and the [PE FAQ](#).

As in all other courses, students’ grades in PE must be based primarily on their content area knowledge and skills, and not on non-competency measures. Schools may not factor attendance into students’ grades or grade students predominantly on participation or preparedness. See the section of this guide on [grading policies](#) and the [Grading Policy Toolkit](#) for more details.

NYCDOE sports and physical education programs, including physical education classes and school teams, are educational opportunities. Participation in these activities is integral to developing a student’s fitness and health, self-esteem, and general well-being. Transgender and gender expansive students must be given the same opportunities to participate in physical education as all other students.

Schools must follow the [Guidelines to Support Transgender and Gender Expansive Students](#) when programming students for physical education and provide access to facilities such as locker rooms and restrooms consistent with the student’s gender identity asserted at the school. Schools also may not separate students by gender for physical education classes or activities except for contact sports as outlined in the [Guidelines on Gender Inclusion](#).

[NYC FITNESSGRAM](#) is the City’s annual health-related fitness assessment. Schools use NYC FITNESSGRAM assessments to help students identify the importance of healthy fitness zones, set goals, and create long- and short-term fitness plans. Schools may not use performance on this assessment to determine students’ grades.

There are no waivers or exemptions from PE requirements in middle school. Students with chronic or temporary medical conditions or disabilities must participate in physical education. Students with temporary medical conditions must provide the school with a medical certificate of limitation provided by a physician, physician assistant or nurse practitioner that indicates the area of the PE program in which the pupil may participate. Students with chronic medical conditions or disabilities documented by a Section 504 Plan or Individualized Education Program (IEP) must participate in PE in the least restrictive environment, as indicated on their 504 Plans or IEPs, which could include an [Adapted Physical Education](#) (APE) program if necessary. APE is specially designed physical education instruction suited to the interests, capabilities, and limitations of students with disabilities who may not safely or successfully engage in the activities of the general physical education program without adaptations. APE instruction must be captured in STARS. APE must be taught by a NYCDOE certified PE teacher

and counts toward the student's PE requirement. Please see the [Adapted Physical Education FAQ](#) and [Special Education Standard Operating Procedures Manual](#) for additional information about APE.

## 6. *Health Education - Updated August 2023*

[Part 135.3](#) defines the minimum requirements for health education instruction, which includes required annual lessons on HIV and AIDS in each grade. Schools must provide all middle school students with one half-unit (the equivalent of 54 hours) comprehensive health education course that includes sexual health education and mental health education. The course must be aligned to [NYSED learning standards](#) for health education and must be taught by a certified health education teacher. The NYCDOE strongly recommends that this course takes place during grades 6 or 7, so that students are adequately prepared to make healthy and informed choices throughout middle school.

Comprehensive health education emphasizes skill development around multiple dimensions of health, including social, emotional, mental, and physical health. It also includes these essential content areas: nutrition and physical activity; alcohol, tobacco and other drug use prevention (including heroin and opioids); sexual health (including HIV prevention); safety and injury prevention; violence prevention (including child sexual abuse prevention); and other required health areas. The NYCDOE offers free health education [training](#), curricula, and instructional resources for educators Citywide. For more information, see [NYSED's guidance, information, and resources for health education](#) and the [New York City 6-8 Health Education Scope and Sequence](#), or contact the [Office of School Wellness Programs](#).

The required sexual health education lessons provide students with medically accurate information and skills to avoid risky behaviors. Parents/guardians may opt out of lessons related to methods of HIV and sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevention and birth control. The NYCDOE provides schools with a [sexual health education notification letter](#) from the Chancellor to distribute to parents/guardians prior to sexual health education instruction.

In addition to the half-unit of comprehensive health education, schools must provide HIV and AIDS education to every student, every year. The NYCDOE requires schools to provide the following lessons, using the [Growing Up and Staying Safe: New York City K-12 HIV Education Curriculum](#), which is available through [WeTeachNYC](#):

- Five lessons per year for all students in grade 6
- Six lessons per year for all students in grades 7 and 8

Schools must send each parent/guardian a notification letter, signed by the principal, prior to their child receiving HIV lessons. Parents/guardians may opt their student out of only the specific HIV and AIDS lessons that include methods of HIV and STI prevention and birth control. Lessons regarding abstinence that do not include other methods of prevention do not qualify for this exemption. For detailed guidance on providing standards-based health education, review the [NYC Health Education Frequently Asked Questions](#).

For more information on academic policies and STARS programming for physical and health education courses, schools should contact their [academic policy, performance, and assessment specialists](#). For more guidance on implementing health education instructional programs, contact the [Office of School Wellness Programs](#). See also the section of this guide on [section properties in STARS](#).

## 7. Arts Education

[Part 100.4](#) defines the minimum program requirements for students in middle school grades, which includes instruction in the arts. NYSED recommends that students in grade 6 spend 10% of their time weekly in dance, music, theater, and visual arts, with certified arts teachers or arts partners using curricula that align to [NYSED learning standards in the arts](#).

Schools must provide students in grades 7 and/or 8 with two half-units of arts instruction (54 hours each), taught by a NYCDOE subject-certified arts teacher. As New York City Public Schools offer instruction in all four art forms (dance, music, theater, and visual arts), schools can provide two half units of arts instruction, in any two of the four arts disciplines (visual arts, music, dance, and/or theater), totaling one unit of instruction (108 hours). Schools may choose to complete the requirement in either grade, or across both grades. For example:

Sample Programming Models	Meeting the Requirements Equivalent to 108 hours
Option A	Students may take a semester (54 hours) of music in grade 7 and a semester (54 hours) of dance in grade 8.
Option B	Students may take a full year of arts in <i>either grade 7 or grade 8</i> , covering both visual arts (54 hours) and music (54 hours).
Option C	Students may take arts courses consistently throughout middle school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students may take theater twice per week throughout grade 7, for a total of 54 hours; and</li> <li>● Students may take dance twice per week throughout grade 8, for a total of 54 hours.</li> </ul>

Extended day arts instruction may only count towards the arts requirements in grade 7 and/or 8 if taught by a NYCDOE subject-certified teacher and aligns to [NYSED learning standards in the arts](#).

For music, a student may meet the required half unit of study by participating in a school’s music performance ensemble(s), e.g., chorus; concert, jazz, or modern band; or orchestra, provided that such participation is consistent with the goals and objectives for the school’s music program for grades 7 and 8.

See the [Scheduling in STARS](#) section in this guide for information on how to program arts instruction in STARS.

## 8. Academic Intervention Services (AIS) – Updated August 2023

[Part 100.2\(ee\)](#) of NYSED general school requirements sets the purposes and requirements of Academic Intervention Services (AIS) for New York State public schools. AIS is defined in [Part 101.1\(g\)](#) as “additional instruction which supplements the instruction provided in the general curriculum and assists students in meeting the State learning standards ... and/or student support services which may include guidance, counseling, attendance, and study skills which are needed to support improved academic performance.”

NYSED mandates AIS for students with and without disabilities who are not meeting learning standards in English Language Arts, mathematics, social studies, and science, as well as English Language Learners (ELLs) who are not meeting or in danger of not meeting annual [Part 154](#) performance standards. NYSED has approved amendments to Part 100.2 that delineate a two-step process for identifying students who are eligible for AIS. In grades 3–8, principals must provide AIS to students who demonstrate need, as follows:

- First, schools must identify all students, including students with disabilities and ELLs, who scored below the NYSED-designated performance level on one or more of the NYSED assessments in ELA or math. Students who score below the median scale score between level 2 and level 3 are preliminarily eligible for AIS.<sup>12</sup>
- Then, using additional assessments, schools may make local determinations about which students will most benefit from AIS. Schools must apply the same assessments uniformly across any given grade and in each content area.
- In July 2023, NYSED approved an emergency action that allows schools to identify students in grades 3-8 for AIS services based solely on district-developed procedures when students' State assessment results are not available prior to the start of the school year. As a result, NYCDOE schools must use a universal screening assessment as the first step in identifying students at risk of not meeting NYSED's learning standards in English Language Arts and mathematics. Schools may use a student's results from either the beginning-of-year (BOY) screeners or the end-of-year (EOY) screener from the previous school year to begin this identification process (see [Periodic Assessment](#) for academic screening administration dates).
  - Students who score below the universal screening assessment's benchmark may require tier 2 services, and students who score below the 20th percentile will require intensive intervention in accordance with the school's multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS)/Response to Intervention (RtI) model.
  - Once students are identified based upon these cut points, teachers will utilize informal diagnostic data to validate whether a student requires AIS.

Qualified staff in the area of concern must provide services. Appropriate pedagogues include:

- Teachers licensed in the subject area where the student is not meeting performance standards
- Special education teachers
- Licensed reading teachers

NYSED also mandates student support services when attendance, social/emotional or study skill problems affect a student's ability to meet performance standards. A range of staff can provide mandated student support services, including licensed guidance counselors, at-risk counselors (meaning, SAPIS), members of the school attendance team and non-academic staff who contribute to students' academic success.

For AIS services in a student's identified area of need, schools must provide instruction supplementary to what is occurring in the classroom. This additional instruction cannot occur during classes required by NYSED academic policy. Scheduling options can include extra periods during the school day, before- and after-school programs, weekend tutorials programs and summer school. Computer-based distance learning is also suitable.

Along with choosing specific content of additional instruction, schools may choose to differentiate the intensity of AIS by changing the length and/or frequency of sessions, as well as the group size. Regular progress monitoring must be part of the AIS program and intervention providers must keep records of interventions used and student academic growth.

Schools must provide written notification to the parents or guardians of students who have been identified to receive AIS; notification must be provided in writing, in English and in the preferred language or mode of

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<sup>12</sup>This procedure may also include diagnostic screening for vision, hearing, and physical disabilities.

communication of the parent, where appropriate. The notification must inform the family of the services the student will receive, the reason the student needs such services, and the consequences of not achieving expected performance levels. The school must also notify parents or guardians when it terminates AIS for a student. Schools do not need parent permission to start or to end AIS.

While the student is receiving AIS, the school must maintain ongoing communication to parents or guardians regarding their child's AIS program, including:

- Quarterly reports on the student's academic progress in response to the intervention services
- At least once per semester, an opportunity to consult with the student's regular classroom teacher(s) and the school staff providing AIS for their child
- Information on ways to work with their child to improve achievement, monitor their progress, and work

Schools must track academic interventions in STARS in alignment with current [STARS programming guidance](#).

## ***9. Response to Intervention (RtI)***

Response to Intervention (RtI) is a multi-tiered instruction and intervention model that promotes early identification of students in need of additional academic support and, for students not making expected progress, provision of increasing levels of intensity of intervention. Often referred to as a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), this protocol involves provision of increased levels of intensity in interventions where students require it. RtI is a form of MTSS, although RtI is typically associated with early-grades prevention models. For students identified for RtI services by a school-wide universal screening assessment, evidence-based instruction, intervention driven by diagnostic assessment, and progress monitoring are provided in increasing levels of intensity needed.

While both AIS and RtI have academic recovery as their goals, the RtI structure seeks to increase the accuracy of referrals to special education services by helping to determine whether learning delays are a result of inadequate instruction or learning disability. It also seeks to ensure that all students have access to high quality, effective, evidence-based instruction and differentiated supports.

New York State requires that all schools provide RtI for students in grade in K–4; New York City extends the mandate to the fifth grade. Although RtI is not a formal requirement in the middle school grades, schools may choose to embed RtI/MTSS structures into their AIS programs in order to ensure that academic intervention leads to academic recovery and that students are properly identified for special education referral accurately and where warranted.

Schools must track academic interventions in STARS in alignment with current [STARS programming guidance](#).

## **B. Assessments**

Students in middle school grades take standardized assessments administered by NYSED in accordance with Federal and State regulations, as outlined below. In addition, schools administer classroom-level assessments throughout the year. Some middle school students take language assessments, like the Second Language Proficiency (SLP) or Comprehensive World Language exams, which demonstrate knowledge of high-school level content. In addition, students in grades 8 or 9 who wish to apply to New York City's specialized high schools must take the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT). See the [Assessment](#) page for more information.



## 1. *New York State Tests in English, Math, and Science*

In accordance with Federal and State regulations, students in grades 3–8 in New York participate in NYSED’s [ELA and math tests](#) each year. Students in grade 8 also participate in the [NYSED science test](#).

NYSED is no longer administering the science exam in grade 4. In Spring 2023, only students in grade 8 participated in science exams. Beginning in Spring 2024, students in grades 5 and 8 will take the science exam.

Schools administer NYSED ELA and math tests to students according to their grade level. [Students with disabilities](#) (those with Individualized Education Programs or Section 504 Plans) and [English Language Learners \(ELLs\)](#) may be eligible to receive testing accommodations on these assessments.<sup>13</sup> Schools must base the decision to provide testing accommodations on a student’s individual needs, and the accommodations must directly address the student’s documented diagnosis, disability, or language need. See the section on [testing accommodations](#) for more information.

The following students may be exempt from some or all of these tests:

- Students who participate alternate assessments, such as the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA), rather than standard State tests.
- Recently-arrived ELLs, including students from Puerto Rico, who have attended school in the United States for less than one year, as of April 1 of the year in which the NYSED ELA exam is administered, may be eligible for one, and only one, exemption from the administration of NYSED ELA Exam in grades 3–8.
  - In lieu of the NYSED ELA Exam, schools may administer the [New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test \(NYSESLAT\)](#) to exempted students for participation purposes only. All other ELLs must participate in both the NYSED ELA Exam and the NYSESLAT. See the [Policy and Reference Guide for MLs/ELLs](#) for more information.
- Students in accelerated math courses who take high school-level Regents exams as their culminating assessments:
  - In an effort to reduce the number of standardized tests students take, students in grades 6 through 8 in high school math courses where a Regents exam is the culminating assessment are exempt from the NYSED math test for their grade level. Schools must not administer the grade-level test to these students unless their parents request it. This policy applies through 2024-25, in alignment with this [memo from NYSED](#).
  - As described in [Regents Exams](#), schools may not bar students from taking a Regents exam for disciplinary reasons or because their achievement in a subject is considered unsatisfactory.
- Students in accelerated science courses who take high school-level Regents exams as their culminating assessments:
  - Students in grade 7 or 8 in high school science courses where a Regents exam is the culminating assessment are exempt from the intermediate-level science test. Schools must not administer the grade-level test to these students unless their parents request it. This policy applies through 2024-25, in alignment with this [memo from NYSED](#).

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<sup>13</sup> NYSED and NYCDOE refer to English Language Learners (ELLs) as Multilingual Learners/English Language Learners (MLs/ELLs) except in instances referring to state and federal policy.

- o As described in [Regents Exams](#), schools may not bar students from taking a Regents exam for disciplinary reasons or because their achievement in a subject is considered unsatisfactory.

**Impact on accountability:** Regents exams taken in lieu of regular 7th or 8th grade Math or Science are included as substitutes in all accountability reports including the NY State School Report Card, State Accountability Statuses, and NYC DOE School Quality Reports. All of these use conversion charts to determine which Regents scores count as which level in the regular exam metrics (e.g. percent proficient or performance index). The most recent conversion charts, used in 2019, can be found on [page 263 of the SIRS Manual](#) and [pages 35-40 of the School Quality Reports Educator Guide](#). Exams in future years are likely to use similar tables.

## 2. *Second Language Proficiency Exam (SLP) – Updated August 2023*

The Board of Regents adopted the revised New York State Learning Standards for Languages Other Than English (LOTE)/World Languages on Monday, March 15, 2021. For more information on the changes, implementation timeline, and proficiency ranges aligned to the Checkpoints, see the [NYS World Languages Standards and Guidelines](#).

The [Second Language Proficiency exams](#) (SLPs) are designed to assess student proficiency of the [Checkpoint A learning standards](#) for World Languages.<sup>14</sup> According to [Part 100.2 \(d\)](#) of the NYSED general school requirements, schools may offer students World Languages instruction prior to grade 8 but no later than the beginning of grade 8 so that students are provided at least two units of study (108 hours) by the end of grade 9. The NYCDOE currently offers SLP exams in Chinese (Simplified), French, Italian, Latin, and Spanish to middle schools that instruct students in these languages. Students enrolled in courses in these languages must be offered the opportunity to take the exam. This culturally responsive practice is a requirement that will allow students to receive high school credit; schools offering the SLP exam may not refuse the exam option to any eligible student.

See the [World Languages](#) section of this guide and the [World Languages](#) guidance document for additional information on middle school World Languages program options and how to indicate this on the middle school transcript.

## 3. *Regents Exams – Updated August 2023*

NYSED Regents exams assess a student’s proficiency of NYSED [commencement-level \(high school\) learning standards](#) in a subject area. All students enrolled in the course of study leading to a Regents exam have the right to take that exam. Schools may not bar students from taking a Regents exam for disciplinary reasons or because their achievement in a subject is considered unsatisfactory.<sup>15</sup>

Regents exams are designed to be culminating exams for high school courses; the NYCDOE recommends that middle schools only register students for a Regents exam after completing an accelerated unit of study in that subject area. The following additional eligibility criteria apply:

- To qualify to take a Regents exam in any of the sciences, a student must successfully complete 1,200 minutes of lab experiences in addition to completing the science course. Students in NYCDOE grade 8

<sup>14</sup> The first locally developed Checkpoint A assessments based on the revised standards, as well as the assessment frameworks provided by NYSED, will be administered in June 2025.

<sup>15</sup> See this guidance on [School Administrator's Manual for Secondary Level Examinations](#).

accelerated courses must be scheduled for these lab experiences during the school year (see the section on [Grade 8 Course Acceleration](#) and the [middle school course code directory](#) for details on how to schedule students for the required labs).

As of September 2022, NYSED amended Part 100.5(b) to allow the 1,200-minute requirement to be met through a combination of hands-on and simulated laboratory experiences; virtual lab experiences to meet this requirement were not permissible prior to COVID-19. For more information, see New York State’s [FAQ Related to Virtual Laboratory Experiences and the 1,200-minute Laboratory Requirement](#).

- Schools wishing to administer the Comprehensive World Language exam or the OHM BOCES World Language exams in middle school, should refer to the [World Languages](#) guidance document or contact their [academic policy, performance, and assessment specialists](#) lead for support.

Students who attempt Regents exams in middle school may use those scores towards high school exam requirements. See the section of this guide on [Grade 8 Course Acceleration](#) for information about how students in grade 8 can earn high school credit.

Since the 2019–20 school year, all Regents exam scores (passing and failing) appear on students’ middle and high school transcripts. Parents have the option to remove numeric exam scores when the student has a Regents waiver (‘WA’) or approved appeal (‘WG’) in the same exam subject.

### Special Appeals

Due to the continued impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning, NYSED approved an additional option for students to graduate using a lower score on a Regents exam: the Special Appeal. This option provides flexibility to students who took Regents exams in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years in meeting the assessment requirements for any diploma type.

See [Appeals to Graduate with Low Scores on Regents Examinations](#) for more details.

## C. New Students and Grade Placement - Updated August 2023

[Chancellor’s Regulation A-101](#) outlines the admission, readmission, and transfer policies for all NYCDOE students.

Students entering a NYCDOE middle school for the first time after having attended school outside New York City public schools are placed in a grade level based on the available education records from the student’s previous school at the time of enrollment. If there are no educational records, the student will be placed according to calendar year of birth. If the principal deems that another grade level placement would be more instructionally appropriate, they must submit a grade change request to the superintendent using the [RQSA-GRC](#) function in ATS and provide evidence to justify any recommendation. The superintendent will make the final decision concerning the appropriate grade level for the student.

The following procedures apply to student grade placement:

- If a student enrolls in a NYCDOE school with insufficient or no prior educational records, like students newly arrived in the United States, they will be registered provisionally based on age. The school must provide the student with a provisional academic program from the first day of enrollment. Within the first two weeks of enrollment, the principal must evaluate the instructional appropriateness of the grade placement based on available records, diagnostic assessments, and conversations with both the student and their family.

- If a student is discharged from a NYCDOE school and returns within the same academic year, the student will be placed based on consideration of the student's grade placement at their previous NYC school and the available educational records from the student's last school that are presented at the time of enrollment. If no records are available, the student will be placed in the same grade level as when they were discharged in that academic year.
- If a student is discharged from the NYCDOE and returns to the NYCDOE in a subsequent academic year, the student will be placed in a grade level the same way as a student enrolling at a NYCDOE school for the first time.
- If a student transfers between NYCDOE schools within an academic year, the student's grade placement does not change.

See the section of this guide on [Promotion and Grade Level](#) for additional information.

Please note that schools must communicate with families in their preferred language about the rationale for any adjustments to the students' programs. In addition, schools must remain mindful of the social and emotional impact of grade level adjustments and ensure that students have access to the necessary supports throughout the transition, which can include determining students' eligibility for language and/or special education services.

NYCDOE middle schools receiving students from other districts should not record grades or assessment outcomes from the student's previous school in STARS. However, schools should maintain clear policies regarding the extent to which previous academic outcomes factor into final course grades, if at all.

For example, if a student transfers to a NYCDOE school for the first time in the spring of grade 8, the school may choose to incorporate the student's report card grades from the fall semester into the student's final course grades. Alternatively, the school may choose to base the student's final grade only on the work completed by the student at the NYCDOE school in the spring semester. See the [Grading Policy](#) section of this guide, the [Grading Policy Toolkit](#), and the [Transfer Student Toolkit](#) for more information.

In rare cases, transfer students may have completed high-school-level courses at a previous middle school. In this case, the middle school should place the student into a grade level according to the policies described above, considering opportunities for advanced or accelerated courses where available. The middle school should not award transfer credit for high school courses taken in middle school. However, the student's subsequent high school may choose to award transfer credit for these courses in alignment with the policies described in the Transfer Credit section of the [High School Academic Policy Guide](#).

## 1. *Translations*

Schools are responsible for ensuring that transcripts or other key records written in a language other than English are translated effectively so that students can be programmed and served appropriately. Schools may use school- or community-based translators or the student's home country Embassy or Consulate for assistance. When working with a translation vendor, schools should use the portion of the budget earmarked for translation services.

Schools should never use the student or the student's family to complete the translation and may not charge them for the cost of translation. Additionally, the NYCDOE's [Office of Language Access](#) does not translate student-specific documents.

## D. Promotion and Grade Level

Promotion is the process by which teachers determine if students are ready for and have demonstrated proficiency in the content and skills to be successful in the next grade level. The NYCDOE's student promotion policy, defined in [Chancellor's Regulation A-501](#), ensures that students have the supports they need to build a strong foundation in math and literacy before entering the next grade level.

In accordance with [A-501](#), schools establish promotion benchmarks, or academic standards, which students must meet in order to advance to the next grade level at the end of the school year. Throughout the year, teachers and principals regularly review students' academic performance and identify students who, even with additional support and interventions, may be at-risk of not meeting the promotion benchmarks for their grade level. Each student's academic progress is assessed holistically, using multiple measures, such as NYSED test scores, course grades, writing samples, projects, assignments, and other performance-based student work. While NYSED test scores may be considered, they may not be the determining factor in assessing a student's readiness for the next grade.

Students are held to different promotion benchmarks based on their grade level and, if applicable, their English language learner (ELL) status and/or the criteria specified on their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). The following groups of students are not held to the promotion standards outlined in [A-501](#):

- Students in pre-kindergarten;
- ELLs in grades 3–7 who have been enrolled in a United States school system (USSS) for less than two years;
- ELLs in grade 8 who have been enrolled in a USSS for less than one year; and
- Students with IEPs who participate in alternate assessments, such as the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA), rather than standard State assessments.

The promotion process includes multiple steps throughout the year, described in greater detail in the [Promotion Implementation Guide](#):

At the beginning of the school year, schools define the promotion benchmarks students must meet in order to be ready for the next grade level and establish the multiple measures they will use to assess students' progress toward the promotion benchmarks at each grade level.

- In the fall, schools hold parent-teacher conferences and send report cards home to provide early notice to families of how students are progressing.
- In January and February, schools designate students who may be at risk of not meeting promotion benchmarks for their grade level and send written notice (via promotion in doubt letters) to their families.
- In the spring, schools hold parent-teacher conferences and send home report cards to keep families and students aware of their progress and anticipated promotion decision.
- In June, schools make promotion decisions, which they communicate in writing to families.
- In July, students who were not promoted attend summer school.
- In August, schools make final promotional decisions for students in grades 3–8 who were not promoted in June. Families receive written notice of the final promotion decision. Families may appeal these decisions, in writing, and the superintendent makes the final determination.

See the [Promotion Implementation Guide](#) and [Promotion Policy and Process](#) for information on how to implement the promotion process throughout the school year. For information on how promotion criteria should be determined, applied and evaluated for students with disabilities, refer to the [Special Education Office's promotion page](#).

In grades 3–8, grade level is determined by the promotion decision entered in ATS. Schools may use [RQSA–GRC](#) or [RQSA–PAT](#) to appeal promotion decisions and request grade level changes. Schools must submit grade change requests to the superintendent for review; the superintendent makes a final determination. The NYCDOE does not recognize skipping grades as a promotion option.

### **E. Students Participating in Moving Up Ceremonies**

Middle school students must meet [promotion benchmarks](#) to participate in their school’s moving up ceremonies. Schools must clearly communicate these expectations to students and families.

A school may prohibit a student who is already on suspension at the time of the moving up activities from attending when they pose a real threat of violence or disruption to the event, but the exclusion must be proportionate to the infraction committed. Schools may also bar a student with particularly egregious conduct from a moving up ceremony, as long as the school has previously advised the student and family in writing.<sup>16</sup>

## **III. COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **A. Grade 8 Course Acceleration – Updated August 2023**

Per [Part 100.4\(d\)](#), students in grade 8 have the opportunity to earn high school credits in various departments, including English, social studies, mathematics, science, world languages, art, music, and career technical education (CTE). Students in grades 6 and 7 are not eligible to earn high school credit through accelerated courses, except in World Languages.<sup>17</sup>

Most students in grade 8 must pass English, social studies, math, and science courses to be promoted to grade 9, in accordance with [NYCDOE promotion policy](#).<sup>18</sup> Schools must carefully consider the impact that accelerated courses may have on students’ ability to be successful in grade 8, prepare for high school, and be promoted to grade 9. Students who take an accelerated course as their only grade 8 core course must pass the accelerated course to fulfill promotion requirements.

Middle school principals are responsible for determining which courses to offer for high school credit and engaging with students and families to identify students with an interest in the subject matter and demonstrated proficiency in similar courses. All students, including students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs), should be considered for accelerated courses. For all accelerated courses, particularly those that typically require multiple years of study and/or are usually completed in grades 11 or 12, principals should consider students’ academic readiness for the course. Additionally, before scheduling students for accelerated courses, principals have the responsibility to consider students’ future high school programming options. Schools should notify students and families of programming needs and how this may inform high school application decisions.

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<sup>16</sup> See this guidance on [Exclusion from Graduation Ceremonies](#).

<sup>17</sup> See the [World Languages](#) section of this guide and the [World Languages](#) guidance document for additional information on middle school World Language program options.

<sup>18</sup> In rare circumstances, students in grade 8 may be subject to different promotion criteria. ELLs with a status as a student with interrupted/inconsistent formal education (SIFE), ELLs who have been enrolled in a United States School System (USSS) for at least one year but fewer than four years, and students who participate in alternate assessments are held to different promotion criteria. See the [Promotion Guide](#) for more information about promotion criteria for students in grade 8.



There is no limit to the number of accelerated course credits a student may earn in grade 8, though all accelerated courses must meet instructional time requirements to bear credit (which is 108 hours of instructional time over the course, during grade 8). The following caveats also apply:

- Middle school students may not accelerate PE credits for high school. See the [PE FAQ](#).
- To qualify to take a Regents exam in any of the sciences, a student must successfully complete the equivalent of 1,200 minutes of hands-on or virtual laboratory experiences in addition to completing the science course. See the [Regents Exams](#) section for more information.
- Labs must be recorded on student transcripts, with a clear indication of whether the student successfully completed the laboratory requirement by demonstrating proficiency of learning standards (for example, 'P' or 'F' to indicate pass or fail, or the equivalent per the school's grading policy). The lab component of the course may not be credit-bearing; it must be provided in addition to the 54 hours required for each science credit. Labs must be indicated separately in STARS using the appropriate code ('AL' in the sixth and seventh character) as described in the [Middle School Course Code Directory](#). Schools can provide the 1,200 minutes of hands-on or virtual lab experiences in a single term or across multiple terms.

The two ways for grade 8 students to earn two credits for high school-level courses are detailed below. High schools may not refuse to accept accelerated course credits or schedule students to repeat credits that have been appropriately awarded in alignment with NYCDOE and NYSED policies.

### *1. Option 1: Accelerated Courses at Middle Schools*

In traditional grade 8 acceleration, students take an accelerated course in middle school aligned to high school-level standards, culminating in a Regents, SLP, or Comprehensive World Language exam in June or August immediately following the course. These students earn credit after passing both the course and the assessment.

For option 1, grade 8 accelerated courses in middle school must:

- Provide students the opportunity for the equivalent of 54 hours of instruction per credit (108 hours of instruction per two credits all year, since most middle schools use an annual term model);
- Address high school (commencement-level) learning standards; and
- Be taught by an NYCDOE teacher certified in the subject area.

Students in grades 6 and 7 are not eligible to earn high school credit through accelerated courses, except in World Languages.

In order to earn high school credit for the course, grade 8 students must pass the accelerated course and earn a specific minimum score.<sup>19</sup> The minimum score that a student needs to earn to receive high school credit after passing the accelerated course depends on the type of exam and if the student has an IEP.

Since school year 2018-19:

- Grade 8 students without IEPs must score 65 or higher on the culminating Regents exam in June or August immediately following the course.
- Grade 8 students with IEPs must score a 55 or higher on the culminating Regents exam in June or August immediately following the course.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Schools must reach out to their [academic policy, performance, and assessment specialist](#), if they wish to offer an accelerated course in a subject that does not culminate in a Regents exam.

<sup>20</sup> This change applies only to current and future grade 8 students who are enrolled in an accelerated course. High schools may not retroactively award high school credit to students with IEPs who previously passed a grade 8 accelerated course but earned 55-64 on the culminating Regents exam prior to school year 2018-19.

- In 2021-22 and 2022-23, any grade 8 student who scores 50-64 on the culminating Regents exam in June or August immediately following the course receives accelerated course credit if approved for a [Special Appeal](#).

As a result of the impact of COVID-19, students who receive a score of 50-64 on Regents exams taken in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years may be eligible for the Special Appeal. See [Appeals to Graduate with Low Scores on Regents Examinations](#) for more details on the eligibility criteria and how to submit the request in RQSA.

For accelerated courses culminating in the SLP or Comprehensive World Language exam, grade 8 students with and without IEPs must pass the accelerated course and score 65 or higher on the culminating SLP or Comprehensive World Language exam.

Schools must program accelerated courses in STARS using the accelerated course codes and exams described on the [STARS wiki](#); schools cannot modify these course codes in any way. This ensures that the equivalent high school courses and credits appear on the high school transcript, provided the student passes both the accelerated course and Regents exam in the appropriate timeframe.

Since school year 2019–20, all Regents and Comprehensive World Language exam scores (passing and failing) appear on students' middle and high school transcripts. For more information about students who have failing Regents exams and do not want their score to be displayed on a transcript, see the guidance on [Transcript Updates](#).

After passing a full year of accelerated study (meaning 108 hours) aligned to high school learning standards and the associated Regents or World Language exam, a student earns two high school course credits and can use the passing score toward exam requirements for graduation. Students who successfully complete the SLP as their culminating exam will earn two high school credits but cannot use this exam toward exam requirements for graduation.

High school credit **may not** be awarded in the following circumstances:

- A student passes the accelerated course but does not earn the required minimum score on the culminating Regents exam in June or August, immediately following the end of the course. Even if the student passes the Regents exam in the following year, the student will not receive high school credit. Schools cannot retroactively award high school credit for Regents-aligned grade 8 accelerated courses.<sup>21</sup>
- A student earns the required minimum score on the Regents, World Language Comprehensive, or SLP exam but does not pass the accelerated course(s). The Regents and World Language Comprehensive exam scores will appear on the student's high school transcript, but they will not receive high school course credit.

## 2. *Option 2: High School Courses*

For option 2, an individual eighth grader in a school that does not offer a grade 8 accelerated course (as described in option 1) may attend a course at a high school and earn credit on the same basis as the high school students in that course. Participation in high school courses as an eighth grader should be on a student-level basis; this option is only meant for students who have demonstrated their ability to participate in high school course work and be

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<sup>21</sup> The one exception is for a World Language course. A student may retake an SLP exam at any point until high school graduation even after having passed a Checkpoint B exam to receive credit for a first year World Language course as long as that credit is not duplicative.

successful in a high school setting.<sup>22</sup> These students will have high school course codes and credits on their high school transcripts. Evidence of the course will not appear on the student’s middle school transcript.

In this scenario, the high school uses the shared instruction ([SHIN](#)) function in ATS to enroll the student. The high school then schedules the student using the high school course code and awards grades in STARS.

Since school year 2019–20, all Regents and World Language Comprehensive exam scores (passing and failing) appear on students’ middle and high school transcripts. For more information about students who have failing Regents exams and do not want their score to be displayed on a transcript, see the guidance on [Transcript Updates](#).

## **B. Interdisciplinary and Multi-Grade Courses**

The section below provides policy guidance on the implementation of interdisciplinary and mixed-grade courses. Recording interdisciplinary and mixed-grade courses appropriately in STARS ensures accurate data for student promotion, teacher evaluation, and accountability.

### *1. Courses Addressing Two Subject Areas*

Interdisciplinary programming combines [learning standards](#) from two different content areas in a single course. For example, a school may offer a humanities course that integrates both English and social studies standards. The following policies apply to middle school interdisciplinary courses:

- The course must be overseen by a NYCDOE teacher certified in at least one of the two subject areas addressed in the course, provided that the teacher instructs the student population defined by the license area and has demonstrated subject matter competency in both subjects.
- In grades 7 and 8, the interdisciplinary course must align with both of the grade level [program requirements](#). For example, an eighth-grade humanities course covering English and social studies learning standards must provide the equivalent of 360 minutes of instruction per week (216 hours per year) in order to satisfy the requirements for one unit of study in each subject area.

Schools must reflect both subject areas in STARS and award grades accordingly. Schools have two options for scheduling students and awarding grades for interdisciplinary courses:

- Use the interdisciplinary mechanism to schedule students for a ‘ZJ’ coded course linked to two other subject area course codes. For example, students may be scheduled for a ‘ZJ’ course titled “Humanities,” which is linked to the core English and social studies course codes. Marking period grades should be awarded in the ‘ZJ’ interdisciplinary course. Final grades should be awarded in the subject area course codes upon expansion of the interdisciplinary course at the end of the term. See the [STARS wiki](#) and this [interdisciplinary guidance document](#) for more information.
- If the course meets for a double period, schools should schedule students for the two courses separately, using the same teacher for both courses. For example, for a humanities course, students should be scheduled for English during the first period and social studies during the second period. The teacher should award grades for both courses. The grading policy must clearly indicate whether students receive the same grade for both subject areas or whether they are graded separately.

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<sup>22</sup> Grade 8 students who participate in an accelerated course, comprised of grade 8 students, at a high school must meet the requirements listed in Option 1. For support in scheduling these students in STARS, schools should contact their [academic policy, performance, and assessment specialist](#).

## 2. *Courses with Multiple Grade Levels*

Schools may offer mixed-grade courses in a single subject area in order to meet students' academic needs. For example, a math course may group sixth and seventh grade students with similar math proficiency. The following policies apply to mixed-grade middle school courses:

- A NYCDOE subject-certified teacher whose license area includes the grade levels of all students enrolled in the course must instruct the course.
- Students must take the [New York State tests](#) corresponding to their grade levels. For example, sixth-grade students in a mixed sixth- and seventh-grade math course must take the sixth-grade math test. Seventh grade students in the same course must take the seventh-grade math test.
- In grades 7 and 8, the course must align with unit of study requirements described in the section on [program requirements](#).
- The school must use the interdisciplinary table in STARS to schedule students for a 'ZJ' coded course linked to the course for both grade levels. For example, in a mixed sixth- and seventh-grade math course, the school must schedule students for a 'ZJ' course linked to the core sixth-grade and seventh-grade math course codes. The subject-certified teacher assigned to the course will assign marking period grades in the 'ZJ' course and final grades in the grade-level-specific core math course code corresponding to students' individual grade levels. See the [STARS wiki](#) for more information about this table.

## C. **Online and Blended Courses – Updated August 2023**

Middle schools may choose to offer online and blended learning experiences and may incorporate these online courses into their academic programs. These courses are defined by the way instruction is delivered to the student:

- In an online course, students receive their instruction on course content solely through digital and/or Internet-connected media. The course may include teacher-to-student, student-to-student and/or student-to-content interactions, but the instruction itself is fully delivered through media.
- Some schools may choose to use online vendors to deliver instruction virtually. In these cases, the course content is pre-packaged and provided by an external vendor. Students may log on to a vendor-provided website that contains videos and interactive tools, to receive lessons and instruction in a specific subject.
- In a blended course, students receive their instruction through a combination of classroom-based learning and through digital and/or Internet-connected media. This may include teacher-to-student, student-to-student and/or student-to-content interactions.

Online and blended courses are regular courses and must meet the same academic policies required of traditional classroom courses. See the [Online and Blended](#) guide for details on implementation.

Online or blended courses that bear credit or fulfill NYSED unit of study requirements must meet the following minimum standards:

- Align with [NYSED learning standards](#) for the subject area, as outlined in the course syllabus;
- Be instructed or overseen by a NYCDOE subject-certified teacher, who creates the syllabus, monitors the course, provides the student with substantive and regular feedback, awards the final grade, and is the teacher of record in STARS; and<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See the [Online and Blended Courses](#) guidance document for additional information about the role of the teacher.

- Meet [instructional time requirements](#), by providing the opportunity for 180 minutes of instruction per week, or 54 hours per credit awarded. This includes at least one synchronous session per week that is programmed in STARS.

Additionally, all of the following must be true of online and blended courses:

- The course is of equal scope and rigor to other courses offered by the school.
- The course includes regular and substantive interaction between the student and the subject-certified teacher, which may occur in person and/or virtually and must be documented by the school. This includes at least one synchronous session per week that is programmed in STARS.
- The student must complete the course within one term, comparable to a traditional course.

For students in middle school accelerated courses, they must meet the learning outcomes for the subject and pass the Regents exam in the subject area immediately following the class. See the [Grade 8 acceleration policies](#) for more information on earning high school credit while in middle school.

All courses, including courses with content provided by online vendors, must be [scheduled in STARS](#). Schools must code courses with content provided by online vendors like traditional classroom courses, using the standardized [Middle School Course Code Directory](#), and identify online and blended coursework using the [section properties](#); see the [Scheduling in STARS](#) section of this guide for additional information. Schools may not permit students to do a ‘trial run’ of an online or blended course without it being scheduled in STARS. Schools cannot retroactively add an online or blended course to a student’s transcript or change the grade of an online or blended course, unless the rationale meets the explicit criteria outlined in the [Transcript Update Form](#).

## D. Honors Courses

Schools may offer advanced or honors courses to provide opportunities for students to engage with more rigorous [learning standards](#) in a subject area, expand the scope of the learning standards addressed in core courses, and/or prepare for [course acceleration in grade 8](#).<sup>24</sup>

Schools have discretion in how they offer honors courses, provided the criteria and expectations for honors courses are clearly documented and communicated to students, teachers, and families. Schools may not use [NYSED test scores](#) as the sole, primary, or major factor in determining which students take honors courses. Schools may incorporate report card grades, school-based assessment scores, teacher recommendations, and other measures into their selection criteria.

Students in honors courses are still required to take the NYSED standardized assessments corresponding to their grade levels; see the section on [NYSED tests](#) for more information. Additionally, students in honors courses are held to the same promotion standards described in [Chancellor’s Regulation A-501](#) and in the [Promotion and Grade Level](#) section of this guide.

Schools must schedule honors courses in [STARS](#) according to the standards in the [Middle School Course Code Directory](#) (use an ‘H’ in the sixth character). Schools must code honors courses to indicate the grade level of the students taking the course, even if the standards addressed in the course exceed grade-level standards. For

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<sup>24</sup> [Gifted & Talented \(G&T\) programs](#) are offered within district elementary schools, beginning in kindergarten and ending in the school’s terminal grade. Therefore, most middle schools do not have G&T programs.

example, a grade 7 honors English course that also addresses grade 8 standards must be coded with a '7' in the fifth character to represent that the students are in seventh grade (EENM7H).

## IV. POLICIES FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS

### A. English Language Learners (ELLs)

Policies regarding English Language Learners (ELLs) are defined in NYS [Commissioner's Regulation \(CR\) Part 154](#).<sup>25</sup> Students are identified as ELLs based on the results of the New York State Identification Test for ELLs ([NYSITELL](#)). For additional information on ELL identification and placement, including Students with Interrupted/Inconsistent Formal Education (SIFE), see the [Policy and Reference Guide for MLs/ELLs](#).

Once a student has been identified as an ELL, parent selection of an ELL program drives program placement. Parents/guardians of ELLs are invited to a parent orientation, where they view an orientation video in their preferred languages, which describes the NYCDOE's three program options: Dual Language Bilingual Education (DLBE), Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE), and English as a New Language (ENL) only, described further in the [Policy and Reference Guide for MLs/ELLs](#). All parents are entitled to choose among these three options, regardless of whether their child's current school has their program of choice. The [NYCDOE's website](#) provides a variety of resources for ELL students and families.

Schools may not refuse admission to zoned students or students assigned by the NYCDOE's Office of Student Enrollment based on their ELL status or program needs.

Schools are required to form bilingual programs in grades K–8 when there are 15 or more ELLs with the same language in one grade or in two contiguous grades, for whom parents/guardians chose a bilingual program placement. This threshold is the minimum requirement under State regulations ([CR Part 154](#)), as amended by the ASPIRA Consent Decree, but by no means limits schools that choose to open programs with fewer students. For example, when parents request bilingual programs in a small school, the school can pool resources and staffing with other schools (for example, campus schools and neighboring schools) in order to provide wider access to programs.

For all ELL programs, the number of ENL, bilingual content area, and Home Language Arts units provided is based on English proficiency and all units must be standards-based. See the [Policy and Reference Guide for MLs/ELLs](#) for more information.

#### 1. *New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL)*

The [New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners](#) (NYSITELL) is used to initially identify English Language Learners (ELLs). New entrants with [Home Language Identification Survey](#) indicating a language other than English spoken in the home, and who may have English language acquisition needs, take the NYSITELL to determine if they are eligible for bilingual and English as a New Language (ENL) services. Based on NYSITELL results, students are categorized into one of five English language proficiency levels:

- Entering
- Emerging
- Transitioning

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<sup>25</sup> NYSED and NYCDOE refer to English Language Learners (ELLs) as Multilingual Learners/English Language Learners (MLs/ELLs) except in instances referring to state and federal policy.



- Expanding
- Commanding

A student's level of English language proficiency determines the number of service hours they receive. More information is available on [NYSED's website](#). See the [Policy and Reference Guide for MLs/ELLs](#) for more information on ELL services.

## 2. *New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT)*

All [ELLs](#) take the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) every year to determine how well they are learning English and to determine continued eligibility for ELL services as part of the required annual assessment. The NYSESLAT assesses students' speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. For more information regarding NYSESLAT administration, see the [Policy and Reference Guide for MLs/ELLs](#).

### **B. Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities should, regardless of their disability:

- Have access to a rigorous academic curriculum that sets high academic standards, enabling them to fully realize their potential and prepare for independent living, college, and careers.
- To the greatest extent appropriate, be taught and participate in activities with other students with and without disabilities.
- Receive special education services that are targeted to their needs and provide the appropriate level of support throughout the school day.
- To the greatest extent possible, be able to attend their zoned schools or the school of their choice, while still receiving the special education services and supports required.

It is the responsibility of each school to ensure that students with disabilities and their families feel welcome. The [School Implementation Team \(SIT\)](#) facilitates the strategic planning to ensure that every school appropriately and adequately serves all students. The SIT works with other school teams but does not usurp the function of the school-based IEP team.

Students with disabilities who do not require special education services but need health services and/or education accommodations in order to attend school or participate in regular school activities may be eligible for a Section 504 Plan. To determine student eligibility for a Section 504 Plan, a student's parent or guardian and physician must complete and submit [school health forms](#) to the school. The school's Section 504 team reviews the student's records and the physician's statement to determine accommodations the student is eligible to receive. There are two types of accommodations:

- Health accommodations, which include administration of medication (for example, asthma and diabetes medication) and medically prescribed non-medication treatment (for example, G-Tube feeding).
- Educational accommodations, which include testing accommodations (for example, extended time and separate testing location), classroom accommodations (for example, assistive technology), and other academic supports and services.

If approved by the Section 504 team, these accommodations must be provided to the student.

Schools should review each new student's IEP or Section 504 Plan upon entry. If a student's IEP or Section 504 Plan recommends programs or services that the school has not previously provided, the school should first make it clear to the parents and student that they are committed to providing the programs and services that are recommended on the IEP or Section 504 Plan, beginning on the student's first day at that school. For questions related to programming for students with IEPs, schools should contact their Administrator of Special Education

(ASE). For questions related to Section 504 Plans, see the [Office of School Health’s guidance](#) and [Chancellor’s Regulation A-710](#). For other policies related to students with disabilities, see the sections on [testing accommodations](#), [NYSAA](#), and [scheduling in STARS](#).

A student’s status as a student with a disability, and any information related to their disability, is private information. Schools should ensure that any student records and report cards that may be shared with a third party do not reveal a student as having a disability. For example, schools should not list courses titled as “SETSS” on a transcript.

## 1. *New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA)*

In accordance with Federal and State regulations, students in grades 3–8 in New York participate in NYSED [ELA](#) and [math](#) tests each year. Students in grades 5 and 8 participate in [NYSED science tests](#).<sup>26</sup> NYSAA is an alternate assessment to measure progress and performance in ELA, math, and science for students with severe cognitive disabilities who are unable to participate in standard assessments, even with testing accommodations.

Annually, IEP teams determine the eligibility of students with disabilities who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to participate in standard or alternate assessments. The IEP team determines this eligibility on a case-by-case basis.<sup>27</sup>

Students who are eligible for alternate assessments “have limited cognitive abilities combined with behavioral and/or physical limitations and who require highly specialized education and/or social, psychological, and medical services in order to maximize their full potential for useful and meaningful participation in society and for self-fulfillment.”<sup>28</sup> Eligibility for participation in alternative assessments is not determined by disability classification.

IEP teams should carefully consider this decision, as participating in alternate assessments rather than standard State assessments has long-term implications for students and their families. In high school, students who participate in alternate assessments in lieu of Regents exams for one or more subjects are not eligible to earn an NYS high school diplomas; they instead earn the [Skills and Achievement commencement credential](#).

Students who participate in NYSAA are expected to achieve alternate learning standards. These alternate standards are reduced in scope and complexity. They are intended to enable students to access NYSED learning standards but focus more closely on supporting students for post-secondary life (for example, vocational and life skills).

Schools administer the NYSAA to students according to their chronological age and against grade-level standards set by NYSED.<sup>29</sup> The ELA, math, and science NYSAA exams are computer-delivered adaptive assessments. These measures of achievement:

- Provide eligible students with an alternative way to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.
- Measure students’ progress towards achieving academic goals.
- Support teachers and specialists in adapting instructional strategies and supports.

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<sup>26</sup> NYSED no longer administers the science test to grade 4. Beginning in Spring 2024, students in grades 5 and 8 will take the science exam.

<sup>27</sup> See NYSED’s [Eligibility and Participation Criteria - NYSAA](#)

<sup>28</sup> See [section 100.1 \(2.\) \(iv.\)](#)

<sup>29</sup> Students eligible for NYSAA must be assessed on the grade-appropriate content that is consistent with the student’s chronological age. See the [birthdate ranges for students participating in NYSAA](#) to determine chronological ages and corresponding grade levels.

- Are used by schools as part of their usual classroom assessment practices.

The IEP team documents a student’s participation in alternate assessments in the IEP. The student’s IEP must clearly state why the student cannot participate in standard State assessments and the rationale for participating in alternate assessments. IEP teams must inform families at every IEP meeting, using the parent notification of participation in NYSAA letter, that their child will participate in alternate assessments and if they participate in NYSAA for one or more subjects in high school, they will not be able to meet the requirements for an NYS high school diploma.

See the [Alternate Assessment \(NYSAA\)](#) guidance document for more information on NYSAA policies and procedures.

### **C. Testing Accommodations for English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities**

Testing accommodations remove barriers to the test-taking process so that students with disabilities and English Language Learners can demonstrate their knowledge and skills.<sup>30</sup> Testing accommodations do not reduce expectations for learning and are neither intended nor permitted to:

- Change the skills or content being measured or invalidate the results.
- Provide an unfair advantage.
- Substitute for knowledge or abilities that the student has not attained.

The following students may be eligible for testing accommodations:

- Students with disabilities who have IEPs or Section 504 Plans, including:
  - Students who have been declassified and have accommodations specified on their “Declassification from Special Education Services” document continue to receive those accommodations until receiving a diploma or aging out at the end of the school year in which the student turns 21 years old.<sup>31</sup>
  - Students who demonstrate disabilities 30 days or fewer before the administration of a State or district-wide assessment may receive certain testing accommodations if authorized by the principal. For example, a student who breaks their arm days before an exam may be approved for a scribe. Such decisions are made by the principal and must be carefully documented with the Borough Assessment Implementation Director (BAID) and the NYSED Office of State Assessment.
- ELLs and former ELLs for two years after exiting ELL status

Decisions to provide accommodations, as well as the specific accommodations themselves, are made on an individual basis and are reflective of individual student needs. Examples of testing accommodations include:

- Flexible test schedules or timing, including extended time and breaks

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<sup>30</sup> See [NYSED’s Testing Accommodations](#) for further guidance on the following: Recommending Appropriate Testing Accommodations, Aligning Testing Accommodations with Instructional Accommodations, Documenting Testing Accommodations, Students Who Incur Disabilities Shortly Before Test Administration, and Allowable Testing Accommodations Across New York State’s Testing Programs.

<sup>31</sup> Accommodations for students who have been declassified are considered at the time of declassification and entered on the declassification plan. Unlike declassification services, testing accommodations can be provided for more than one year or until the testing accommodations are revised or eliminated. Schools should revisit declassified students’ testing accommodations to ensure that the accommodations listed on the declassification plan still meet the student’s changing needs, especially considering the different types of assessments conducted as students progress through the grades. If a change in student need or type of assessment has occurred, a 504 team should convene to create a 504 with the appropriate accommodations for the student.

- Flexible test settings and locations, including smaller group size
- Method of presentation, including test format (such as large print, braille, audio or digital versions of the test)
- Method of test response, including transcription, scribe, or alternative language edition
- Bilingual dictionaries and/or glossaries that provide direct one-to-one translations of words

At the beginning of the school year, schools should determine which testing accommodations benefit individual ELLs and former ELLs so that students become familiar with their specific testing accommodations. ELLs are entitled to using those accommodations for most assessments, including those that are teacher-made and State-mandated. For a comprehensive list of ELL accommodations, please refer to [NYSED's website](#). For students with disabilities, the IEP or Section 504 team should determine the testing accommodations required for each student at each annual IEP or 504 meeting.

#### **D. Medically Necessary and Hospital Instruction – Updated August 2023**

Medically necessary instruction (MNI) and hospital instruction programs provide educational services for students who are unable to attend school due to orthopedic, non-orthopedic/medical, or psychiatric reasons. MNI and hospital instruction programs are interim programs that provide academic services to limit the educational effects of a long-term absence.

Students maintain their affiliation their NYCDOE school, or “affiliate school,” while on MNI or hospital instruction. Students receive MNI or hospital instruction via shared instruction, in which the MNI or hospital program collaborates with the affiliate school to oversee the student’s instructional program. This relationship ensures continuity of instruction and helps the student maintain a strong connection to the New York City school they will return to after medically necessary or hospital instruction has ended.

NYSED increased the minimum instructional hours for students participating in MNI and hospital instruction programs. Effective July 1, 2023, middle and high school students in MNI and hospital programs must receive a minimum of 15 instructional hours per week, to the extent possible given the student’s condition.

Refer to [Medically Necessary Instruction and Hospital Instruction: Academic Policy Guidance for Schools and Programs](#) for additional information about the collaboration between the affiliate school and the MNI or hospital program.

For information on student eligibility and how to submit a request for MNI, see [Medically Necessary Instruction](#).

#### **E. Home Schooling**

Families who opt for home schooling should understand that home schooling is governed by a separate set of NYSED policies. Students who are instructed at home may not participate in the instructional programs of the NYCDOE; students either receive home school instruction or receive instruction from an NYCDOE school. Home schooled students are not issued report cards or academic transcripts. For more information, see the [Office of Home Schooling website](#) and the [NYSED FAQ](#) on home schooling.

## F. Students in and Returning from Court-Ordered Settings – Updated August 2023

Students who are or have been involved with the court systems are entitled to specific rights related to their education:

- The right to enroll or re-enroll in school in a timely manner
- The right to continue to receive appropriate special education services, where an IEP is in place
- The right to receive assistance from the NYCDOE in obtaining records. For assistance obtaining records, schools should email [reenrollmentsupport@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:reenrollmentsupport@schools.nyc.gov).
- Students returning from court-ordered settings are not required to provide release letters from the custodial agency before re-enrolling or returning to a prior school.

Students in court-ordered settings refers to:

- Students in the custody of Administration of Children’s Services (ACS):
  - When students underage 18<sup>32</sup> are detained in New York City following an arrest, they are under the supervision of the Administration for Children’s Services, Division of Youth and Family Justice (DYFJ).
  - These students attend a NYCDOE school at one of the sites of Passages Academy (79X695), a program operated by District 79. ATS will indicate that the student is on Passages Academy’s register.
  - Students who are adjudicated in Family Court and require a non-secure or limited secure placement are in the custody of ACS DYFJ. These students are considered to be in “placement.” Most of these students remain in New York City and attend Passages Academy.
  - When a student in Passages Academy is released back to the community, the student is transferred back to the register of their prior school.
- Students in an Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) placement:
  - Some students are placed by the Family Court or Supreme Court in the custody of OCFS, or OCFS/ACS-contracted facilities (for example, Children’s Village, Greenburgh-Graham, etc.) and receive educational programming from a non-DOE entity.
  - These students are discharged from Passages (79X695) with a discharge code ‘10.’ Upon the end of their court-ordered involvement, students are required to appear at a Family Welcome Center to reenroll in a DOE school.
  - Students who return to the DOE from an OCFS or other setting have the right to return to the school in which they were enrolled before entering placement.
  - Some students with IEPs who are placed in a school outside of the DOE may receive a new IEP while in custody. Those students, upon re-enrollment in a NYC public school, must be provided a comparable services plan pending development of a new DOE IEP.

See the [Transfer Student Toolkit](#) for information about how to support a student’s transition back to their NYCDOE home school.

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<sup>32</sup> New York’s Raise the Age (RTA) legislation changed the age that a child can be prosecuted as an adult to 18 years of age in criminal cases in New York State. Prior to RTA, 16- and 17-year-olds were prosecuted as adults.

## V. PROGRAMMING AND SYSTEMS POLICIES

The STARS suite of applications is the NYCDOE’s official record of students’ programs, grades, and progress toward completing academic requirements. [STARS Classroom](#), [STARS Admin](#), and [STARS Client](#) comprise the STARS suite of course scheduling and grade management applications used by the NYCDOE. STARS Classroom is a web-based application compatible on most browsers that automates the collection of course marks for teachers. Specifically, teachers can use this system to view [class rosters](#), access student data, and enter course marks which will appear on STARS-generated student [report cards](#).

Middle schools have a responsibility to program students towards the most rigorous coursework possible. All NYCDOE middle schools must accurately reflect students’ academic schedules and coursework in STARS. Maintaining accurate student and teacher schedules in STARS ensures schools, students, and families understand how a student is progressing towards graduation. It also reduces data requests from central offices to schools.

### A. Term Models

Schools must designate a term model in STARS. A term is defined as the length of a course with one syllabus and a final grade and credit(s) earned. Schools may adjust the number of weeks of instruction per term in STARS, as long as they have designated enough instructional days to meet State instructional day and aidable day requirements, as well as individual course instructional time requirements. Individual courses may be shorter than the school’s designated term model. However, schools cannot offer courses that span across multiple terms; courses must begin and end within one term.

Schools may choose from one of four term models:

- Annual: about 36 weeks of instruction, in which students remain in a course the entire year and receive final course marks in June. Most middle schools use an annual term model.
- Semester: about 18 weeks of instruction, in which the year is divided into two terms
- Trimester: about 12 weeks of instruction, in which the year is divided into three terms
- Cycle: about 9 weeks of instruction, in which the year is divided into four terms

Term model heavily influences course sequences, student programming and progress to graduation, and the frequency of awarding credits. Schools should not modify the term model frequently and must never adjust the term model during the school year.

### B. Scheduling in STARS

A school’s academic program is operationalized through its [master schedule](#). The master schedule contains key information about current course offerings including the teacher of record and locations and meeting days. Each course has the following attributes that can be used in creating both student and teacher schedules:

- Course code
- Section number
- Period
- Cycle (meaning, number of days per week the course meets)
- Capacity (the maximum number of students that can be scheduled in one section)
- Room number
- Teacher name



Once the master schedule is set up, schools can begin to program their students. Schools typically program students using either an individual or block scheduling model, or some combination of the two methods, which are described in brief here:

- Individual scheduling: Students are scheduled based on individual needs and requirements. As a result, each student’s schedule is unique. Courses may be scheduled as a daily uniform program or on a rotation cycle.
- Block scheduling: Students are grouped according to their needs, or by special program or grade level. Each group follows the same schedule. In some cases, block scheduling may allow for longer periods and normally requires courses to meet on a rotation.

In addition to individual and block scheduling, schools may choose to adopt different instructional approaches in accordance with contractual requirements.

## 1. *Course Codes*

Schools indicate the courses they currently offer by designating active course codes. STARS course codes capture information about the subject area, course content and its alignment to NYSED [learning standards](#), the position of a course within a sequence, the instructional level, and delivery model. They are used for student schedules, report cards, transcripts, and NYCDOE data and accountability purposes.

Schools must follow the coding practices detailed in the [Middle School Course Code Directory](#) to ensure that course sequences can be interpreted by other NYCDOE schools and NYCDOE tools. The use of the standardized codes outlined in the [Middle School Course Code Directory](#) allows users within and outside the school community to understand what the course codes signify. Many NYCDOE reports, tools, and data feeds use the rules established in the [Middle School Course Code Directory](#) to inform their business rules.

Middle school accelerated course codes must not contain additional characters after the required [accelerated codes](#).

Prior to building the term's master schedule, schools should review their course offerings and active codes for the given year and term and ensure the courses will again be available. At this time, schools should also adjust course codes for the current school year and beyond, as needed. Schools must not modify historical course codes, as this can result in the loss of important academic data. As described in the [Transcript Update](#) guidance, schools must not complete transcript updates in order to “clean up” or delete and modify historical course codes to better align with the above policies and practices.

Course codes and other attributes like title and credits are set at the course level. The information designated by the code applies to all students in the course and sections receiving that content. Schools may not customize codes for individual sections or students who are sitting in the same class. For support with course coding, schools may contact their [academic policy, performance, and assessment specialists](#).

## 2. *Course titles*

Schools also select the title of their courses. These titles appear on students' transcripts and records, and they are visible to those within and outside of the NYCDOE.

The New York City Department of Education is committed to maintaining a safe and supportive school environment for all students free from harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying and free from discrimination on account of actual or perceived race, color, creed, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship/immigration status, religion, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, or weight.

To support this district-wide commitment, schools should be mindful of what a course title reveals about participating students. Specifically:

- Course titles may never indicate that a course is designed specifically for students with disabilities (for example, courses may not be titled "English Special Ed").
- Course titles should not identify the gender of students participating in those courses (for example, Girls Health or Boys Choir).

See the [Guidelines on Gender Inclusion](#) for help implementing gender-inclusive curricula, programs, activities, and practices that are consistent with this policy and with the DOE's commitment to equity and access. Schools must be mindful that inappropriate gender segregation may result in isolating students, hindering diversity, and/or perpetuating gender stereotypes.

The additional guidance applies:

- The titles of courses should be easy for an external reader to interpret. Information about the themes and topics covered in required courses can hinder postsecondary institutions' ability to understand a student's academic history. This information can be communicated with students and families through course catalogs or other materials.
- Courses for which a standard code is not available are generally coded using 'Q' in the second character. The titles of these courses should be descriptive so that the reader of the transcript can interpret them. For example, the course "MQSM7H: Math Topics" does not provide any information about the content of the course and whether it is high-school level, while "MQSM7H: Pre-Algebra" clearly describes the course content.

## 3. *Section Properties*

Schools capture additional information about the delivery method and content of the course using [section properties](#). These fields further identify the unique properties of a course/section, including:

- If the course integrates English as a New Language (ENL) within a subject
- The target language of instruction and percent of time in target language
- The special education model
- If the course integrates computer science subjects and is part of the Computer Science for All initiative
- For health education, the number of HIV/AIDS lessons given to the students, during the year and term
- If the course uses iLearn, this section property must be checked for the course to properly connect to iLearn or Google Classroom.

In order to ensure students are receiving the instruction to which they are entitled, and to support accurate reporting for compliance, schools must carefully complete the section properties in each year and term and ensure they accurately reflect students' experiences. For additional support, refer to the following STARS Wiki pages: [Computer Science](#), [English Language Learners](#), [Special Education Programming](#), and [Section Properties](#).

#### 4. *Push-in/Pull-out Instruction*

Push-in and pull-out instruction occur when a teacher other than the primary teacher(s) delivers targeted instruction to a subgroup of students on a regular basis. Push-in and pull-out instruction can be used to meet a variety of instructional needs including, but not limited to, intervention, enrichment, and services for English language learners and students with disabilities.

Push-in and pull-out instruction must always be programmed in STARS to reflect the content delivered to students. It must be scheduled to reflect the frequency with which the push-in or pull-out instruction occurs. Push-in/pull-out instruction records identify the teacher, the minutes and meet times, the subject of the instruction (using course codes), and any other important properties.

- In push-in instruction, an additional teacher instructs a student or subgroup of students within the primary class. The STARS push-in record should match the subject being delivered in the primary class.
- In pull-out instruction, a student or subgroup of students leaves the primary class to receive instruction from a second teacher.

Integrated co-teaching (ICT) is not considered push-in or pull-out instruction. Instead, this is indicated as a section property.

See the STARS wiki for additional details and instructions for programming [push-in and pull-out instruction](#), [programming English Language Learners](#) and [special education programming](#).

## VI. GRADING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### A. Grading Policies

All elementary, middle, and high schools must have written grading policies that they review and update annually. Well-documented grading policies facilitate discussion with students and families about academic growth and support students and families in sharing ownership of their learning. School-based grading policies should be developed in consultation with the school community and grounded in the needs of their students. Grading policy documents may be organized in a variety of ways, depending on the extent to which schools' grading policies are standardized at the school, department, or course level.

Schools must share a physical or electronic copy of their grading policy with students and families at the beginning of the school year. Schools should also share grading policies at open houses, parent-teacher conferences, on the school website, and through other touchpoints with families. Students and families have the right to request the grading policy at any point in time, per the [Student Bill of Rights](#) and the [Parents' Bill of Rights](#). Schools must translate their grading policies for families when needed.

All grading policies must explain, at a minimum, how grades are determined, the grading scales used, and the timeline of when students receive grades. In addition, schools should have clearly defined procedures to ensure that students' final course grades are entered in STARS by the end of the term, and in some cases may be entered up to 20 business days (or 4 weeks) after the end of the term for individual students who need additional time.

Schools have discretion in deciding which specific measures are factored into students' grades. Schools must make determinations of passing or failing based primarily on how well students demonstrate understanding of the subject matter, concepts, content, and skills addressed in a course or subject. Even in courses like physical

education (PE), science labs, or electives, students must be graded based primarily on how well they have learned the concepts and subjects being taught.

When students miss class time, teachers should give students reasonable chances to make up missed work before final grades are entered in STARS.

Attendance may not be factored into a student's grade. Attending school, participating in class, and demonstrating understanding are all essential components of student learning, and school communities must make every effort to ensure that students attend school, with a goal of every student, every day. When students attend school consistently, they have the greatest opportunity to make progress, receive support from their teachers, and demonstrate their learning. Students' grades must reflect the extent to which they have met the learning outcomes for their courses.

All students, including [students with disabilities](#) and [ELLs/MLs](#), should be working toward grade-level standards and must receive grades based on competency of [NYSED learning standards](#).<sup>33</sup>

- ELLs/MLs: Grading policies should consider students' English as a New Language (ENL) proficiency level and should include opportunities for students to demonstrate competency of NYSED learning standards in their native language.
- Students with disabilities: All students, including students with disabilities, should be working toward grade-level standards and should receive grades based on how well they comprehend the content and skills addressed in a course or subject. An Individualized Education Program (IEP) describes specially designed instruction and accommodations for an individual student that creates access to grade-level standards and enables progress toward annual goals. Students' receipt of accommodations may not impact the grade that can be earned. Students with disabilities have the same opportunity to earn grades as all other students.
  - Schools issue report cards to provide feedback on students' progress in the general education curriculum and distribute progress reports to reflect the likelihood a student will meet or has already met their annual goals. While progress reports are usually distributed at the same time as report cards, they may not replace report cards for students with disabilities.
- Students with disabilities who participate in alternate assessments: Due to the severity of the students' disabilities, schools modify the general education curriculum to provide students access and allow for participation and progress. Modification changes the expectation of what skills students need to demonstrate they have met the learning outcomes of the course. To accommodate different expectations, a school's grading policy should address how they grade students with disabilities who participate in alternate assessments.

Schools must not use Regents exam scores as a factor in student grades.

For information on how to develop and implement strong grading policies that promote accurate, equitable, and social-emotionally responsive grading, refer to the [Grading Policy Toolkit](#).

## **B. Course Marks and Report Cards**

Schools determine the total number of marking periods to include within a year, semester, trimester, or cycle, depending on the term model they use; see the section of this guide on [term models](#) and the [overview of term](#)

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<sup>33</sup> See the United States Department of Education's [Dear Colleague Letter](#).

[models guidance](#) for more information. Schools must give at least two grades (marks) in each course per term and enter them in STARS, to ensure that students have the opportunity to receive at least one interim and one final mark in every course. The last marking period in the term (for example, year, semester, trimester, or quarter, depending on the school's model) is where final course grades for that term are recorded.<sup>34</sup> Schools should clearly define procedures for calculating and entering final grades in STARS by the end of the term, and in some cases may be entered up to 20 business days (or 4 weeks) after the end of the term for individual students who need additional time.<sup>35</sup>

## Important Terms to Know

**Grades** are a reflection of students' understanding and command of content, their progression through a course or subject, and their competency of skills *at a given point in time*.

**Grading policies** outline when and how students receive feedback on their competency of content and skills. Schools can address these elements in one or more document(s). Schools are not required to use a specific format when drafting their grading policies. The purpose of a grading policy is to allow students, families, and teachers to have a mutual understanding of what specific grades mean. Schools may establish grading policies at the school, department, grade, or course level, provided the school applies their grading policies equitably to all students.

**Term** is the length of a course with one teacher or set of teachers, one syllabus, and a final grade. Schools must designate a school-wide term model in STARS before the start of the school year. A school's designated term model defines the maximum length of any course experience that it may offer. Individual courses may be shorter than the school's designated term model. Schools cannot offer courses that span across multiple terms; courses must begin and end within one term. The term model a school uses heavily influences student programming.

**Marking periods** are intervals during a course when the teacher of record awards interim marks, which provide status updates to students, families, and other stakeholders.

**Report card grades** are indications of students' progress toward proficiency of the course's learning standards at a given point in time. These are grades that do not appear on the transcript. Report card grades may be standalone or cumulative. They are also often called marking period grades.

**Final grades (marks)** are given at the end of the term, representing the work students completed over their courses and should reflect the ultimate level of proficiency at the end of the course, *as of that point in time*. This grade may also confer credit(s) when a course is credit-bearing. The teacher of record determines the final mark in accordance with the school's grading policies and the City and State's academic policies.

### 1. Course Marks – **Updated August 2023**

All schools are required to enter both interim and final report card grades (course marks) into STARS for grade levels K–12, regardless of the type of report card they choose to use. Schools should enter grades in accordance with their school-level grading policies and in accordance with the [Grading Policy Toolkit](#). Schools are not required to enter indicator marks or narratives if the school is not already using the STARS report card. The marks entered in STARS must accurately match the marks awarded and communicated to students and families.

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<sup>34</sup> For additional information on generating final grades in STARS, see this page on the STARS wiki on [Grades and Exams](#).

<sup>35</sup> See the STARS wiki for more information on [how to define terms](#) and [enter marking period grades](#).

Schools must award grades in STARS using the NYCDOE grading scales in the [Course and Exam Marks Tables](#) to ensure that measures of student progress are transparent and translatable across schools. Schools may choose to award grades using one or multiple grading scales, provided the use of each scale is clearly explained in the school's grading policies. The principal, in consultation with the School Leadership Team (SLT), may determine whether grading scales are set at the school, department, grade, or course level. Each course mark has a citywide pass/fail equivalent, and most have a numeric equivalent used in the calculation of GPA.

The following policies apply to specific course marks:

- **Course in Progress ('NX')**: Schools must award a grade of Course in Progress ('NX') if a student has a documented, extreme extenuating circumstance that prevents them from completing the course in its established timeframe (for example, surgery or a death in the family). 'NX' does not have a pass/fail or a numeric equivalent. A student who receives a Course in Progress must successfully complete remaining course requirements by the end of the term following the termination of the course in order to receive a final passing grade and credit, as applicable. Schools must update the previously awarded 'NX' with the final grade via transcript update.
- **New or Recently Admitted Students ('NL')**: Schools must award a grade of 'NL' to students who enroll in a course after it has started and may have missed assignments or assessments needed to generate a complete course grade for the given marking period. These students may be given a grade of 'NL' in STARS to indicate the student did not have the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the course content. 'NL' does not have a pass/fail or numeric equivalent. Students who receive a grade of 'NL' must successfully complete remaining course requirements by the end of the term following the termination of the course in order to receive a final passing grade and credit, as applicable. Schools must update the previously awarded 'NL' with the final grade via transcript update.
- **No Show ('NS')**: Schools have discretion in using this mark, but it is recommended that the mark be used sparingly if at all. An 'NS' has a pass/fail equivalent of fail and a numeric equivalent of 45. If schools choose to use this mark, it should be reserved for the most egregious situations, where a student has been given multiple chances to make up missed work and the school has made every effort to determine whether a student has extenuating circumstances that are interfering with their education.
  - Neither long-term absentees (LTA) nor students receiving hospital or medically-necessary instruction should be assigned an 'NS' mark. See [Medically Necessary and Hospital Instruction](#) guidance for information on how schools should collaborate with students receiving medically necessary or hospital instruction. Schools who have students who are LTAs and have missed more than 20 consecutive school days, must follow the [guidance on using ZLTA codes](#) so that students are not awarded marks.

See the [Course and Exam Marks Tables](#) in the appendix of this document for the full list of grading scales and marks available for middle schools.

## 2. *Report Cards – Updated August 2023*

[Report cards](#) can be generated in STARS for each marking period and must be distributed to students and families at least twice per term: one report indicating the student's progress and one report indicating the student's final grades for the term. Schools may use the standard NYCDOE report card and/or school-developed materials to provide students and families with more information about their progress and performance. Schools can refer to the [Student Report Cards](#) webpage for sample STARS report cards, including translations.



All schools are required to enter both interim and final report card grades into STARS for grade levels K–12, regardless of the type of report card they choose to use. Schools should enter grades in accordance with their school-level grading policies. The marks entered in STARS must accurately reflect the marks awarded and communicated to students and families.

As a way to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students, schools should use gender-neutral language in report cards and other student records that will remain with the student throughout their academic career.

Examples of gender-neutral language include:

- Using the student’s name or the singular “they” instead of gendered pronouns like “he” or “she.”
- Avoiding gender stereotypes and focusing on the individual student’s strengths and weaknesses.
- Using inclusive language that includes all genders, such as “children,” “learner,” or “student.”

By using gender-neutral language, schools can help create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all students, regardless of their gender identity.

All school staff members and students must refer to students by their chosen names and pronouns, consistent with the [Guidelines to Support Transgender and Gender Expansive Students](#).

### 3. *Competency-Based Learning* – **Updated August 2023**

Competency-based learning is a pedagogical approach where instruction, feedback, and assessment are organized around the most important skills and knowledge in a course, called learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are pre-determined competencies and skills in reference to standards. In a competency-based learning system, students are given timely, differentiated supports based on evidence of their learning, as well as multiple opportunities to demonstrate their proficiency. Implementing competency-based learning requires long-term planning and strong support from the school community, including teachers, administrators, students, and families. For additional guidance on programming students in schools that employ competency-based learning models, see the [Competency-Based Learning](#) guidance document. Schools should contact their [academic policy, performance, and assessment specialists](#) for direct support with academic policy and programming.

Beginning in the 2023-24 school year, schools have the option to use a new, four-level competency-based grading scale that includes numeric marks. This new scale is designed to meet the needs of competency-based schools and other schools that seek to grade students using proficiency levels rather than the numeric (10-100) or alpha (A-F) scales.

## C. **Transcript Updates**

Schools must have procedures to keep [student transcripts](#) up to date to ensure that students are progressing toward promotion requirements. Schools may complete a transcript update only in specific circumstances. Schools must complete all transcript updates in accordance with the policies listed in the [Transcript Update](#) guidance document by completing the [Transcript Update Form](#) and providing any necessary supporting documentation.

Middle schools may update a student’s final grade for the following reasons:

- Change an existing grade:

- Grade calculation/entry error, in accordance with the course’s grading policy
- Updating a grade of Course in Progress (‘NX’) or Recent Admit (‘NL’) to a final grade, per the policies outlined in Course Marks and Report Cards
- Principal override, in accordance with CSA and UFT contracts (a teacher must be notified in writing of any principal override of final course grades)
- Parent Choice Policy
  - Remove an exam due to parent request
  - Add an exam that was previously removed due to parent request
- In rare cases, add an exam:
  - Regents exams taken at a New York State school outside NYCDOE
  - NYSED-approved alternatives to Regents exams
  - Successful special appeal to graduate with a low score on a Regents exam as outlined in the [Appeal to Graduate with a Low Score on Regents Exams](#) guidance (‘WG’)

Schools must have a signed and completed [Transcript Update Form](#) with documentation that supports the change being made before completing the transcript update. Schools cannot perform transcript updates for reasons not specified on the form. They cannot use transcript updates to add courses that were never scheduled and cannot use the transcript update process to modify historical course codes or credit values for individual students. See the [Transcript Update](#) guidance for additional information.

## D. Calculation of Grade Point Average (GPA) and Rank

Schools may determine which courses taken at their school to include in the calculation of student GPA and whether to establish school-based policies for class rankings. Schools are encouraged to consider factors such as equity, motivation, and academic integrity when considering whether to specify an individual student’s rank to move away from using grades as a means of comparative student recognition and instead celebrate all students.

In cases where class rank is necessary (e.g., to determine a student’s eligibility for extracurricular activities), schools should consider designating students as being in the top 10% or top 25% for GPA outside of STARS without assigning each student an individual number/rank in STARS. Schools should share clear, documented policies with students and families that take into consideration which students are eligible to be ranked, which courses count in the ranking, how courses are weighted, and how the final rank will be calculated. In STARS, when calculating the rank, schools can determine which students are included in the denominator by creating a [custom group](#) and excluding or including students based on their ranking policy. Schools should complete their ranking prior to discharging students.

## VII. ATTENDANCE, DISCHARGE, AND OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

### A. School Calendar

Each year, the school year calendar is centrally designed to meet the NYSED requirement of a minimum number of 180 school days, and a minimum of 990 instructional hours for students in grades 7-12. Please see [New York State Education Commissioner’s Regulation 175.5](#) regarding State Aid. The [NYCDOE School Year Calendar](#), which includes Chancellor’s conference days for professional development and parent teacher conference times, is pre-

determined to ensure that schools do not fall below the minimum number of aidable days while adhering to contractual requirements and observing key holidays. According to NYSED:

- Aidable days must be between September and June
- Classes or activities scheduled on Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays do not count towards the 180 aidable days

To avoid the risk of a reduction in State Aid, and to limit the impact on bus scheduling and other services, schools may not deviate from the calendar except in limited circumstances. See the [NYCDOE Calendar Change Requests](#) page for additional information and the link to the Calendar Change Request Application.

## B. Daily Session Time and Student Schedules

Each year, the principal determines a school’s schedule in alignment with contractual obligations and NYSED minimum instructional time requirements. Changes to the schedule that deviate from the traditional contractual requirements require a vote via the School-Based Option (SBO) process.

The principal determines a school’s schedule in alignment with contractual rules and the above instructional time requirements, described in the [Session Time Memo](#). Once a school’s overarching session times and contractual work day schedules are established in the [Session Time Application](#), students must be programmed for all instructional time in the STARS suite of applications. For middle and high schools, this includes updating the bell schedule in the STARS client with accurate information to inform student programming.

In accordance with State policies around school funding and State Aid, schools must provide all students with a minimum amount of instructional time per school year:

- In grades K–6 a minimum of 900 hours of instructional time, over at least 180 aidable days
- In grades 7–12 a minimum of 990 hours of instructional time, over at least 180 aidable days

These are experiences where students are:

- Receiving instruction from a teacher in an academic subject area
- Engaged in instructional experiences which are supervised by a qualified pedagogue

Instructional time does not include minutes where instruction and/or supervised study time is not provided to students, such as lunch or recess. Schools must work to maximize student instructional time and prioritize time in the classroom. This may include reducing minutes of passing time between periods and eliminating homeroom if it is not operationally necessary.

In order to meet these requirements, NYCDOE schools must provide a total of 25 hours per week to students in grades K–6 and 27.5 hours per week to students in grades 7–12 of supervised instructional time, exclusive of lunch. This time may include supervised, instructional experiences overseen by teachers at the school that occur off-site.

Schools must provide students the following minimum instructional time, summarized in the table below, over at least 180 aidable days, as set forth in the [NYCDOE’s School Calendar](#):

Grade levels	Hours per year	Hours per week
Students in full day kindergarten and grades 1-6	900 hours/year	25 hours/week
Students in grades 7-12	990 hours/year	27.5 hours/week

Schools may choose to extend their school day beyond the required hours with the help of community-based organizations/non-profits and special grant opportunities; however schools must deliver their mandated instruction and services, including for [English language learners](#) and the IEP-recommended program and related services for [students with disabilities](#), during the regular, mandated school day.

For middle and high school grade levels, the following applies:

- Regents testing and Regents rating days are considered aidable days by NYSED. Schools should carefully consider if students would benefit from attending class and receiving instruction during these days. In general, Regents Days should be instructional, unless it is necessary for schools to allow students to leave the building to support proper exam administration.
- **In 6–12 schools:**
  - Schools serving students in grades 6–12 may use the function [CCLA](#) (release code 43) to release students in affected grades if the exam administration will disrupt normal instruction. Approval is not required, provided the school is releasing on the days of Regents exams only.
  - Similarly, secondary schools may request the release of grades 6–8 during the Regents exam period if middle school students take local final examinations, as described above.
- **In K–12 schools:** Schools serving students in grades K–12 must request approval in advance if they would like to release students in affected grades during Regents exam administration. Schools must follow the [Calendar Change Request process](#).

To avoid the risk of a reduction in State aid, and to limit the impact on bus scheduling and other services, schools may not otherwise deviate from the published NYCDOE School Year Calendar without an approved calendar change request. See the [NYCDOE InfoHub](#) for more information about the calendar change process, eligibility requirements, and dates that are not permitted to change.

Note that days of special events, such as PSATs, field trips, promotion ceremonies, etc. are days of attendance; impacted grades may not be released.

The following additional guidance on programming non-attending students applies:

- Schools must follow the guidance in [Attendance, Discharge, and Strategies for the Reduction of Chronic Absenteeism](#) for any students who are not attending school.
- Schools should use official classes (via **CMOD**) to organize their register and attendance rosters, including for students with long-term absences (LTAs). Monitor attendance for non-attending students who may be marked present in error.
- Schools are responsible for ensuring that all students, including students who are absent for extended periods of time, are provided with an academic program that moves them toward graduation and college and career readiness. In the event that a student is absent for more than 20 consecutive school days the school may:
  - Add administrative block(s) to serve as a transition schedule, in which the student will meet with a counselor, administrator, and/or other school staff members prior to their return to classes, with a 'ZA' in the first two characters. This 'ZA' functional course serves to indicate that the student needs to see the guidance counselor or another administrator upon return.
  - Partially or fully remove the student from the academic program for which they were previously scheduled. The school should retain a copy of the academic program in the student's cumulative record to facilitate the process of recreating the program in STARS at a later date.

- If a student returns from an extended absence, the following must occur:
  - On the same day the student returns, the school must develop a transition plan, which may include discussing the student’s progress toward graduation and postsecondary goals, diagnosing the student’s academic proficiency, informing the student’s teachers of the student’s current program, and providing the student with information about school systems and structures. For any remaining time in the school day, the school must provide the student with academic instruction in alignment with their needs.
  - By the following morning, the school must provide the student with a full academic program. To create this program, the school should review and adjust the student’s most recent academic program to ensure that it will support the student in progressing toward graduation and college and career readiness. Where needed, the school should modify the program to provide opportunities for academic intervention and recovery.

### **C. Attendance, Discharge, and Strategies for the Reduction of Chronic Absenteeism – Updated August 2023**

Attending school, participating in class, and demonstrating understanding are all essential components of student learning and achieving success in school and in life. It is the collective responsibility of the New York City school system to make every effort to remove barriers to attendance and to help every student attend and learn in school every day.

To see the full 2023-24 attendance policy and related policies, refer to the [Attendance InfoHub](#).

### **D. Student Records Retention and Transfer**

Maintaining up-to-date, accurate student records is an important part of ensuring that students are programmed for the correct courses and exams and receiving the services they need. All schools are responsible for obtaining and maintaining relevant records electronically and in students’ cumulative files. See the guidance provided in [Records Retention and Disposition Schedule for New York Local Government Records LGS-01](#), the [Student Records](#) document and [Chancellor’s Regulation A-820](#).

NYCDOE’s data systems automatically transfer the following information to the next NYCDOE school:

- [ATS](#): biographical information, attendance data, health/immunization records, promotion data, disciplinary history, exam scores, and transportation eligibility
- [STARS](#): students’ previous grades
- [SEIS](#) (Special Education Student Information System): IEP<sup>36</sup>

Students’ cumulative files should be transferred as follows:

- **For students transitioning from NYCDOE elementary schools to NYCDOE middle schools:** elementary schools are responsible for transferring students’ cumulative files to students’ receiving schools each spring once school placement decisions have been finalized. Elementary schools use the [PLNT](#) (general education) and [PSPE](#) (special education) reports in ATS to access students’ middle school DBNs, and distribute students’ cumulative files accordingly. The PLNT and PSPE reports should be included with the records as a cover sheet. Middle schools can use the [RQSA](#) screen in ATS to request missing records as needed.
- **For students enrolling from non-NYCDOE schools:** schools are responsible for confirming students’ prior schools and contacting the schools to request copies of students’ cumulative files in a timely manner in

<sup>36</sup> It is not necessary to transfer a paper copy of the IEP.

order to provide students with appropriate academic programs. See [New Students and Grade Placement](#) for more information on supporting transfer students.

- **For NYCDOE students transferring to non-NYCDOE schools:** only copies of the contents of the cumulative folder should be sent to the admitting school. The original folder should be kept at the school indefinitely.

The [Student Records](#) guidance details what kinds of student records schools are responsible for providing to parents and students. Former students who wish to obtain copies of their academic records should submit a [written request](#) to the school they last attended, accompanied by valid proof of ID. In accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ([FERPA](#)), confidential student information is not available to everyone. This law protects the privacy of student information. See the [Student Records](#) guidance and the [Data Privacy and Security Policies home page](#) for more information.

Reasonable methods must be used to identify and authenticate the identity of parents, students, school officials, and any other parties to whom personally identifiable information from education records is disclosed. When a request comes from a former student who resides out of the New York area, schools must still attempt to confirm the identity of the requestor.

## 1. *Changes to Student Records*

The types of documentation required for records change requests differs depending on the type of record that a parent/guardian or student is seeking to update. Parents and eligible students must submit their request in writing and include the following information:

- the information that is claimed to be inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of the student's privacy rights;
- the education records in which the parent/eligible student believes the information is contained;
- the basis for the claim (i.e., why they believe the information is inaccurate, misleading, etc.); and
- the parent/eligible student's proposed change.

Schools must respond to the request, in writing, within 15 days of receiving it. See pages 11-13 of [Chancellor's Regulation A-820](#) for additional information about the amendment of records and appeals process.

Before updating a student's electronic records, schools must receive the appropriate documentation from the student or parent/guardian as described below.

- **Request to correct a student's date of birth:** Any document accepted as a proof of age for enrollment (for example, birth certificate or passport)
- **Request to correct or change a student's legal name on their permanent record:** A court order, birth certificate, or government ID reflecting the student's legal name
- **Request to correct or change a student's chosen name:** A signed [Name and Gender Change Request Form](#). Students' chosen names are recorded separately from their legal names in ATS and appear on attendance rosters, report cards, and other important documents. See [Preferred Student Name \(Chosen Name\)](#) for additional guidance.
- **Request to change a student's gender marker:** A signed [Name and Gender Change Request Form](#) The DOE does not include gender on student- and school-facing permanent records.

Students are able to change their gender marker and chosen name on their permanent education records without legal documentation by submitting a signed [Name and Gender Change Request Form](#) to their school, which must be signed by their parent/guardian if the student is under 18 years of age. The form can be used by all students (for example, transgender and gender expansive students, those who go by a shortened version of their name, or those who have changed their name for social reasons).



A student's chosen name can be entered or changed in ATS if the parent/guardian—or the student if they are 18 years of age or older—submits a signed [Name and Gender Change Request Form](#) to the school. When the student's chosen first name ('CFN') and/or chosen last name ('CLN') is entered in ATS, the chosen name(s) will display on most student-, family-, and community-facing materials produced by the DOE in addition to most DOE school-facing applications, such as STARS. If a chosen name is not entered for a student, their legal name will continue to display. See the [Preferred Student Name \(Chosen Name\) wiki page](#) for more information.

Schools must retain copies of this documentation in the student's cumulative folder. The former name and/or gender marker will be maintained in archived data to ensure that records will accurately reflect circumstances in effect at the time each record was created, enable records to be cross-referenced, and maintain confidentiality.

For more information, see the NYCDOE's [Guidelines to Support Transgender and Gender Expansive Students](#) and the [guidance on changing a student's name and/or gender in ATS](#).

### **Records Other Than Permanent Records**

No documentation is required to update a name or gender marker in records that are not part of a student's permanent file, such as guidance logs, moving up ceremony programs, sporting rosters, and yearbooks. Schools must use the student's chosen name and gender in all other records that are not permanent records. For students participating in Public School Athletic League activities, they can update their roster by speaking to their athletic director who will email [lgbtq@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:lgbtq@schools.nyc.gov) for support in making this change.

### **School ID Cards**

A student's school ID card is not a permanent record and a school must issue the ID in the name that reflects the student's chosen name. Student IDs must not have gender markers on them. See this [STARS wiki page](#) for step-by-step assistance on updating a student ID without a change in ATS.

## VIII. APPENDICES

### A. Unit of Study Programming Estimates

Schools should design their daily schedule to allow sufficient time to meet unit of study requirements. For middle schools, these benchmarks are defined in [Part 100.1](#) as 180 minutes per week of instruction throughout the school year, or 108 hours per year; more information is outlined in the section of this guide on [program requirements](#).

A unit of study is traditionally based on the amount of instructional time the student receives from a NYCDOE subject-certified teacher in a course aligned to NYSED standards.

The number of minutes of instructional time each day necessary to meet the unit of study suggested benchmarks in a given year depends on:

- The calendar: the number of instructional days in the year
- The term model: whether a school uses semesters, trimesters, or cycles
- The number of times a class meets per week and/or throughout the year if the schedule cycles
- The day of the week a class meets on and how many of that day occur in the calendar
- The length of each class period

The following tables include examples of minimum class times schools may use to earn one unit of study. The tables assume students are in class no fewer than 180 instructional days in the year. The total number of actual days where students receive instruction will vary, so schools should be conservative in their estimates to be sure they will reach the minimum unit of study requirements in any schedules they program for students.

To use these tables, schools should first look up the minimum units of study required for a particular subject. For example, as outlined in the section of this guide on [required units of study](#), schools are required to provide grade 7 and 8 students with two units (108 hours each, for a total of 216 hours) of math. Use the following tables to determine the combinations of period lengths and term models that will allow students to accumulate 216 hours.

**Time Accumulated over One Semester**  
(expressed in total hours, rounded to the nearest hour; days per every 5 class meets)

Minutes per period class meets	1 day	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days
40	12	24	36	48	60
45	14	27	41	54	68
50	15	30	45	60	75
60	18	36	54	72	90
90	27	54	81	108	135

**Time Accumulated over One Year**  
(expressed in total hours, rounded to the nearest hour; days per every 5 class meets)

Minutes per period class meets	1 day	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days
40	24	48	72	96	120
45	27	54	81	108	135
50	30	60	90	120	150
60	36	72	108	144	180
90	54	108	162	216	270

**Time Accumulated over Two Years**  
(expressed in total hours, rounded to the nearest hour; days per every 5 class meets))

Minutes per period class meets	1 day	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days
40	48	96	144	192	240
45	54	108	162	216	270
50	60	120	180	240	300
60	72	144	216	288	360
90	108	216	324	432	540

## B. Course and Exam Marks Table – Updated August 2023

The table below outlines all available grading scales, and their associated marks in STARS, along with their pass/fail equivalents and numeric equivalents. A new four-level, competency-based grading scale will be available in STARS in September 2023 for use in the 2023-24 school year.

Note: The 1–4 (+/-) scale does not have numeric equivalents. Schools may not establish nor communicate numeric equivalents for marks 1, 2, 3, or 4. Also, note that performance level 2 has a fail equivalent. Schools that wish to award grades with numeric equivalents or have more gradation between marks should use a different scale of marks.

Course Mark	Description	Numeric Equivalent	Pass/Fail Equivalent
IB2–IB7	International Baccalaureate scale	N/A	P
IB1	International Baccalaureate scale	N/A	F
4 (+/-)	Performance level: excels in standards (1–4 scale)	N/A	P
3 (+/-)	Performance level: proficient (1–4 scale)	N/A	P
2 (+/-)	Performance level: below standards (1–4 scale)	N/A	F
1 (+/-)	Performance level: well below standards (1–4 scale)	N/A	F
100–65	Numeric course grades (10–100 scale) <sup>37</sup>	65–100	P
64–10	Numeric course grades (10–100 scale)	10–64	F
A+	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	98	P
A	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	95	P
A-	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	93	P
B+	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	88	P
B	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	85	P
B-	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	83	P
C+	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	78	P
C	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	75	P
C-	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	73	P
D+	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	68	P
D	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	65	P
D-	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	60	F
F	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)/Fail (Pass or fail scale)	55	F
P	Pass (Pass or fail scale)	N/A	P
E+	Excellent+ (E–U scale)	98	P
E	Excellent (E–U scale)	95	P
E-	Excellent- (E–U scale)	93	P

<sup>37</sup> In order to avoid conflicting pass/fail equivalencies for marks of 1–4, schools using the numeric scale should round marks of less than 10 to either an 'NC' or a 10 or utilize the 'NS' mark where appropriate.

Course Mark	Description	Numeric Equivalent	Pass/Fail Equivalent
G+	Good+ (E–U scale)	88	P
G	Good (E–U scale)	85	P
G-	Good- (E–U scale)	83	P
S+	Satisfactory (E–U scale)	78	P
S	Satisfactory (E–U scale)	75	P
S-	Satisfactory- (E–U scale)	73	P
N+	Needs Improvement+ (E–U scale)	68	P
N	Needs Improvement (E–U scale)	65	P
N-	Needs Improvement- (E–U scale)	60	F
U	Unsatisfactory (E–U scale)	55	F
CE	Exceeds standards (4-level competency scale)	100	P
CM	Meets standards (4-level competency scale)	85	P
CA	Approaching standards (4-level competency scale)	70	P
CN	Not yet meeting standards (4-level competency scale)	55	F
ME	Exceeds standards (Competency scale)	95	P
MA	Above standards (Competency scale)	85	P
MT	Meets standards (Competency scale)	75	P
MP	Approaching standards (Competency scale)	65	P
MB	Below standards (Competency scale)	55	F
CR	Credit	N/A	P
NC	No credit	N/A	F
NS	No credit–No show (additional policies apply)	45	F
ND	No credit–Fulfilled distribution requirement	N/A	NULL
NU	No credit–Audit	N/A	NULL
NX	No credit–Course in Progress <sup>38</sup> (additional policies apply)	N/A	NULL
NL	New/Recent Admit or Other <sup>39</sup> (additional policies apply)	N/A	NULL

<sup>38</sup> During the transition to remote learning in March 2020, the description of ‘NX’ changed from ‘Incomplete’ to ‘Course in Progress’.

<sup>39</sup> With the release of the 2020-21 Grading Policy, the description of ‘NL’ changed from ‘New/Recent Admit’ to ‘New/Recent Admit or Other’.

Exam 40 Mark	Applicable Exams	Description	Default Numeric Equivalent	Pass/Fail Equivalent
100–65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regents</li> <li>Comprehensive World Language exam</li> <li>SLP</li> </ul>	The numeric exam score the student received on the exam	100–65	P
64–0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regents</li> <li>Comprehensive World Language exam</li> <li>SLP</li> </ul>	The numeric exam score the student received on the exam	64–0	F
ABS <sup>41</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regents</li> <li>Comprehensive World Language exam</li> <li>SLP</li> </ul>	Student was scheduled to take the exam but did not show up on test day	N/A	F
INV <sup>58</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regents</li> <li>Comprehensive World Language exam</li> <li>SLP</li> </ul>	Student cheated on the exam; or Student became ill during the exam and was therefore unable to complete it	N/A	F
MIS <sup>58</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regents</li> <li>Comprehensive World Language exam</li> <li>SLP</li> </ul>	School/teacher misadministered the exam	N/A	N/A
WA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regents</li> </ul>	Waived exam: Student received a NYS Regents, World Language, or NYSED-approved alternative exam waiver.	N/A	P
WX	NYSED-approved Regents Alternative	Student passed NYSED-approved Regents Alternative	N/A	P
WG	Regents	Appealed exam	N/A	P

<sup>40</sup> Schools have the option of displaying only the highest Regents exam score on the transcripts of students who have taken Regents exams multiple times.

<sup>41</sup> Marks of ABS, INV, and MIS will not appear on transcripts. All Regents exam marks are maintained in the students' STARS permanent records.



## C. Impact of COVID-19 – **New August 2023**

Since March 2020, schools have been impacted by the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. NYCDOE schools and students first transitioned to a remote learning model for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year (including summer). In the 2020-21 school year schools utilized remote and blended learning models, and in the 2021-22 school year students returned to in-person learning. During that time both NYSED and NYCDOE implemented policies to address the necessary adjustments to our education system. The following are academic policies that were impacted by COVID-19. Some of these policies and flexibilities have been expanded upon and continue to exist while others are no longer in effect.

### 1. *Program Requirement*

#### a. **Instructional Time Requirements**

A unit of study was previously defined as 180 minutes per week throughout the school year, or the equivalent of 108 hours per unit for middle school. In July 2020, NYSED updated the definition of a unit of study to allow alternative means of instruction, such as online components, to count toward 108 hours per unit.

From March 2020 to August 2020 (the end of the 2019-20 school year, including summer school), the New York State Education Department (NYSED) waived the instructional time requirement for a student to earn course credit, therefore schools were not required to provide the full 108 hours per unit.

During 2020-21, schools had to use 180 minutes per week (or 108 hours per unit) as a benchmark for comparison when designing and delivering instruction aligned to the learning standards.

Since the 2021-22 school year, schools must once again provide 180 minutes per week (or 108 hours of instruction per unit), but this instructional time may continue to include alternative instructional experience.

#### b. **Physical Education (PE)**

In the 2020-21 school year, schools were not expected to meet the traditional frequency requirements (times per week) for PE. Instead, schools were to use the traditional models as a benchmark for comparison in designing schedules for the delivery of PE through blended and remote instruction.

In the 2021-22 school year, students returned for fully in-person learning experiences. As such, schools provided physical education instruction based upon specific time and frequency requirements.

#### c. **Academic Intervention Services Identification**

Due to limited administration of State testing in the 2020-21 school year, NYSED amended section [100.2\(ee\)](#) of the Commissioner's regulations to provide that schools may, but were not required to, conduct the two-step identification process for grade 3-8 students during the 2021-2022 school year. Those schools that did not utilize the two-step identification process made an identification based solely on district-developed procedures applicable to all grade 3-8 students during the 2021-2022 school year.

## 2. *Assessments*

### a. **Assessments**

In March 2020, NYSED suspended all elementary & intermediate level State testing for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year. In March 2021, NYSED provided schools additional flexibility in the local in-school scheduling of the Spring 2021 operational tests. For all state assessments, schools were not expected to bring students into the building to participate in the tests if the students were receiving entirely remote instruction during the testing windows. Schools could also administer the tests to students over the full duration of the testing window to accommodate instructional schedules.

### b. **Regents and NYCDOE Comprehensive Examinations**

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) cancelled the administration of Regents exams scheduled for [June 2020](#), [August 2020](#), [January 2021](#), [August 2021](#), [January 2022](#), as well as most of the [June 2021](#) Regents administrations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, NYSED postponed the administration of the U.S. History and Government (Framework) Regents exam through January 2023. NYSED provided guidelines for the issuance of Regents and World Language exam waivers so that students were not adversely affected by the cancellation of these exams. These waivers represent a passed exam (equivalent to a score of 65).

Students who met specific eligibility criteria to receive the Regents, World Language exam, and NYSED-approved +1 waivers could use them toward the assessment requirement for diplomas, credentials, and endorsements. See the [Regents Exam Waivers wiki](#) for detailed information on the eligibility requirements for these waivers and how to reflect them on student transcripts.

## 3. *Grade 8 Course Acceleration*

### a. **Accelerated Courses at Middle Schools**

Due to the cancellation of Regents and World Language exams from [June 2020](#) through [January 2022](#), students who passed a commencement-level unit of study culminating in these exams were exempted from the exam requirements toward graduation and were eligible to receive high school credit.

## 4. *Online and Blended Courses*

### a. **Online and Blended Courses**

In July 2020, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) revised the definition of “unit of study” in [Commissioner’s Regulations Part 100.1 \(a\)](#) to include instructional experiences delivered through digital technology, including online and blended courses. Instructional experiences are not defined solely as a student’s time spent in front of a teacher or in front of a screen, but time engaged in standards-based learning under the guidance and direction of a subject-certified teacher. In the 2020-21 school year, schools could factor the time students participated in online and blended experiences into their instructional time benchmark of 180 minutes per week. Further, due to the waiver of Regents exam requirements, students did not need to pass the corresponding Regents exam to receive course credit; students received course credit in any subject area waived during a given exam period between June 2020 and January 2022 by meeting the learning outcomes of the course and earning a passing grade, per the school’s grading policy.

Since the 2021-22 school year, and consistent with the online and blended course policy prior to COVID-19, students are required to pass the corresponding Regents exam at the end of the Regents-culminating

term (if available), if the student has not already passed an exam that counts toward a diploma in that subject area. Students must pass at least one assessment in each of these areas to graduate: ELA, math, science, and social studies. This means that if the student has not already passed an assessment in these subjects, they must do so to demonstrate proficiency and earn credit for the online course. For courses that are part of a sequence, this requirement applies to the last term of instruction in that sequence.

## 5. *English Language Learners*

### a. **NYSITELL**

For school year 2020-21 only, NYSED announced expanded eligibility for NYSITELL and a Special Administration of the NYSITELL for current ELLs unable to take the NYSESLAT due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This exception is no longer allowed.

## 6. *Course Marks and Report Cards*

### a. **Course Marks**

During the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years, the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) issued grading policies in response to the academic, social, and emotional needs of students, families, and educators. While most of these policies are no longer in effect, schools must be aware of the policies that were in effect during those times, because they may have some carry-over effects, such as whether grades may be included in ranking. See the [Grading Policy for Remote Learning \(2019-20\)](#) and the [Grading Policy for Remote and Blended Learning Models \(2020-21\)](#) for details.

### b. **Course in Progress ('NX')**

At the end of the 2019-20 school year and during the 2020-21 school year, schools had to award a grade of Course in Progress ('NX') to middle and high school students in place of failing marks or when there was insufficient evidence to award a grade. A student who received a Course in Progress had to successfully complete remaining course requirements by the dates expressed in the 2020-21 Grading Policy to receive a re-calculated final grade. As a result, the initial 'NX' changed to a passing final grade if applicable. The 'NX' remained as the final mark for middle school students who did not complete the remaining course requirements by the deadline.

## 7. *Student Records Retention and Transfer*

### a. **Sharing Student Records**

When school buildings closed intermittently to reduce the spread of COVID-19, schools were encouraged to share student records electronically as needed. The NYCDOE developed [Guidance for Sharing Student Records with Families During Remote Learning](#) for schools to continue sharing educational records in a secure and confidential manner. This resource provides details on responding to student data requests from families, former students, third parties, etc.