

## **Version A (Standards-Based GPA)**

There are two versions of the eligibility policy for districts to consider. Version A includes a standards-based GPA requirement, while Version B relies on course completion and demonstrated proficiency without the use of a GPA. Districts will need to determine which version is best suited to their policy goals and academic programs.

### **Western Mountains Regional School District East High School**

## **Academic Eligibility: Athletic and Co-Curricular Participation**

The Western Mountains Regional School District recognizes the vital contributions that athletics and co-curricular activities make to the academic, social, emotional, and personal development of our students, and the district strongly encourages all students to participate in the diverse athletic and co-curricular programs offered by East High School. Through their involvement in teams, clubs, and peer groups, students learn essential life skills, assume personal responsibility, strengthen character traits, acquire leadership abilities, and build lifelong relationships. Students who elect to play sports, participate in student governance, or join a school group, club, or team make a voluntary commitment to these pursuits and earn the privilege of representing their school and community.

Student participation in athletics and co-curricular activities is viewed as an integral component of the learning process, and for this reason our eligibility policy is intended to be motivational in design rather than disciplinary. Yet while interscholastic athletics and co-curricular activities complement and enhance the academic program, school attendance must remain focused, first and foremost, on learning the knowledge, skills, and habits of work that every graduate needs to succeed in adult life. The district's eligibility policy for interscholastic athletics and co-curricular programs is designed to ensure that academic learning and achievement remain the top priority for every student.

**\*NOTE:** The breadth of school-sponsored activities covered by an academic eligibility policy varies from school district to school district. For this reason, districts may want to modify the language in this exemplar policy to specify which activities it will be applied to—e.g., interscholastic participation and competitions as opposed to school-based clubs and activities.

### **A. Communicating Eligibility Guidelines and Requirements**

The athletic administrator, under the direction of the principal, shall be responsible for ensuring that accurate, up-to-date information concerning the academic eligibility policy is communicated to coaches, activity advisors, teachers, students, parents, and the public. This information may be shared through the following: (1) published annually in the

student and family handbook, (2) posted on the district and high school websites, (3) explained in the athletic code of conduct, and (4) discussed in relevant student and parent meetings offered throughout the school year.

As soon as it is practical and feasible, the Board expects the principal and athletic administrator to inform all students and their families of any modifications made to the district's academic eligibility policy, which extends to all applicable changes in relevant state statutes, rules, or regulations.

### **B. Eligibility Guidelines**

The following policy applies to all interscholastic athletics and co-curricular activities offered, organized, or sanctioned by the district, including:

1. Games, competitions, tournaments, scrimmages, performances, debates, and exhibitions;
2. Practice sessions, rehearsals, training opportunities, team meetings, club gatherings, or other planning and preparatory activities;
3. Tryouts, auditions, interviews, and other selective activities, such as campaigns and elections for student governance; and
4. Elected or appointed leadership roles, including team captaincies, student councils, student governance, or other student offices, such as participation on a school board or leadership committee.

By design, this policy complies with the eligibility policies and requirements for interscholastic athletics maintained by the Maine Principals' Association and all applicable state statutes, rules, and regulations.

To be eligible for participation in interscholastic athletics and co-curricular activities, the student, during the preceding grading period, must have (a) been fully enrolled and is currently enrolled as a full-time student; (b) completed a minimum of five (5) courses and/or school-approved learning experiences—or an equivalent set of courses and learning experiences—leading to graduation; and (c) demonstrated proficiency on the school's academic and habits-of-work standards. Proficiency toward graduation, as defined by state statute, must be demonstrated in the eight content areas and the Guiding Principles of the Maine Learning Results.

**\*NOTE:** Some district policies require students to complete a lower or higher number of courses or learning experiences than the minimum of five specified above. While a minimum of four courses or learning experiences is recommended in many policies, district leaders should determine minimum course-completion requirements based on the design and instructional goals of the academic program.

Eligibility for fall athletics and co-curricular activities will be based on demonstrated academic performance during the fourth quarter of the preceding academic year. In accordance with the Maine Principals' Association policy, incoming ninth-grade students are exempt from fourth-quarter eligibility requirements.

All students who have earned a standards-based grade-point average (GPA) of 2.5 or higher on both academic and habits-of-work standards during the preceding grading period will be considered eligible to participate in the interscholastic athletics and co-curricular activities offered by East High School.

**\*NOTE:** Districts may consider increasing the minimum GPA to 3.0 (proficient) for eligibility in fall athletics and co-curricular activities, given that students are expected to have demonstrated academic proficiency by the end of a given school year.

For those students who did not achieve a GPA of 2.5 or higher during the preceding grading period, the student must meet at least two (2) of the following criteria in all current courses or learning experiences to be considered academically eligible:

1. The student is demonstrating proficiency on a majority of the academic standards.
2. The student is demonstrating proficiency on a majority of the habits-of-work standards.

**\*NOTE:** Some districts prefer to base eligibility strictly on academic measures of performance, while others choose to integrate habits-of-work standards into eligibility considerations. Based on local needs, preferences, or instructional goals, districts can modify policies to either integrate or exclude non-academic considerations.

3. The student is participating in an intervention program—which includes all applicable in-school, out-of-school, and vacation intervention programs, including summer school—designed to get the student on track to demonstrating proficiency on all expected standards by the end of a course, learning experience, or grade level.

**\*NOTE:** Research indicates that participation in athletics and co-curricular activities not only increases student engagement in school, but also increases the chances that a student will persist and earn a diploma. For this reason, the Great Schools Partnership encourages districts to create policies that use academic eligibility as a motivational incentive rather than a punishment. District leaders will need to determine how strict their eligibility policies will be, and to what degree the policies will either promote or decrease athletic and co-curricular participation.

### **C. Academic Probation and Intervention Process**

Students who are determined to be ineligible shall be placed on academic probation and offered intervention assistance. The district believes that students on academic probation should be given (1) multiple opportunities to meet academic eligibility requirements in ways that address the student's distinct learning needs and (2) multiple intervention options that allow for an accelerated reinstatement of eligibility if the student is able to demonstrate significant and measureable progress toward proficiency.

All students placed on academic probation will be required to develop—in collaboration with appropriate teachers, advisors, counselors, coaches, and/or parents or guardians—a personalized intervention plan. The intervention plan will be submitted to the athletic administrator and a designated school administrator or intervention coordinator for review and approval when the student is placed on probation.

The ineligible student will be given three weeks to demonstrate progress and satisfy the eligibility criteria described above. During this period, the student will be allowed to participate in practice sessions, team meetings, club gatherings, rehearsals, tryouts, auditions, and other similar activities, but the student will not be allowed to participate in games, competitions, tournaments, scrimmages, performances, debates, and exhibitions during which the student would be officially representing the school. During the initial three-week probationary period, students may attend games or performances, but they are not allowed to dress in official school uniforms (with the exception of any safety equipment that may be required).

If the student satisfies the eligibility criteria during the probationary period, the student will be reinstated for full participation in athletics and co-curricular activities at the end of the three-week period.

If a student continues to be ineligible at the end of the probationary period, the student will continue to follow the designated intervention program. During this extended probationary period, the student will not be allowed to participate in any athletic or co-curricular activities, including any scheduled trips with a school team, club, or group. Academic eligibility status will be evaluated every two weeks by a district or school staff member designated in the intervention plan, who will evaluate academic progress and determine whether eligibility status should be reinstated.

#### **D. Students Requiring Special Services**

For students identified for special services, the student's individualized education program (IEP) will be used to determine academic eligibility. Guidelines for determining eligibility will be implemented by school administrators and subject to review by the superintendent.

#### **E. Transfer Students**

For students who transfer into the district, academic eligibility will be determined by the principal and athletic administrator and will be based on the last reported grades earned during the previous grading period at the student's sending school.

#### **Cross References**

IKF: Graduation Requirements

IKA: Grading and Reporting System