



Ohio High School Athletic Association
4080 Roselea Place, Columbus, Ohio 43214
Telephone: 614-267-2502; Facsimile – 614-267-1677

www.ohsaa.org

Guidance for 2020-2021–7-8th Grade School Principals and Athletic Administrators

Bylaw 4-4 - Scholarship

Overview – 7-8th Grade

Fundamental to the privilege of participation in interscholastic athletics is the notion that students are to be scholars first and athletes second. Thus, the members have adopted a series of bylaws that reinforce a minimum level of scholastic achievement that is required for a student to be eligible to participate in contests, **which are defined as any game, meet, competition, preview or scrimmage**. Practices and training are exempt from this prohibition, and schools **may** choose to allow students who are academically ineligible to continue to practice with their teams.

This section of the student eligibility bylaw represents the only required OHSAA academic standard. The required grade point average standard (G.P.A.) is mandated by state law for all schools in Ohio. The G.P.A. is established by the local Board of Education or governing board in a non-public school and is overseen exclusively by the member school. In addition, member schools may adopt more stringent standards and may review them more frequently; however, a student who is not compliant with this bylaw may not have his or her eligibility restored except at the beginning of the next grading period as stipulated in Bylaw 4-4-3.

Please note that students who are not enrolled in the member school are also required to fulfill these scholarship requirements. That includes students who are home educated. Despite what some may contend, interscholastic athletics is a privilege to be accorded to those who meet the eligibility standards. Refusal to comply with this scholarship standard shall render the student ineligible.

The intent of this series on the Scholarship Bylaw is to provide guidance as to the purpose behind each bylaw and any action required in support of adopted exceptions.

This document will focus on **Bylaws 4-4-4 and 4-4-5 – 7-8th Grade Scholastic Standard**.

Bylaw 4-4-4 requires that a student who is rising into the first grading period after advancement from 8th grade meet the standard found in **Bylaw 4-4-5** – passing **four** subjects from the last grading period of the 8th grade school year, which would be the immediately preceding grading period. The bylaw reads as follows:

*A student enrolled in the first grading period after advancement from the eighth grade must have passed a minimum of **four** of all subjects carried the immediately preceding grading period in which the student was enrolled.*

Bylaw 4-4-5 reads as follows:

*A student enrolling in the seventh grade for the first time will be eligible for the first grading period regardless of previous academic achievement. Thereafter, in order to be eligible, a student in grade 7 or 8 must be currently enrolled and must have been enrolled in school the immediately preceding grading period and received passing grades **at the conclusion of** that grading period in a **minimum of four of all subjects carried**.*

Bylaw 4-4-5 is the standard 7-8th grade eligibility rule. It is based on a school's grading period and requires a student to have received, when that grading period is concluded, passing grades (not necessarily a traditional letter grade) in four subjects during that grading period. There is no equivalency formula for course work at the middle school level. Therefore, every course counts as "one" of the four required regardless of the time spent in the course, the type of course or whether the course receives a letter grade or a Pass/Fail assessment.

Over the years, the Executive Director's Office has heard various arguments about what a "grading period" is. For purposes of this bylaw, "grading period" refers the period of time, marked on the school's Board approved calendar, at the conclusion of which grades are recorded and the student's GPA is adjusted, if applicable.

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A Note on Educational Options

Please be advised that it is necessary to verify compliance with this bylaw at the end of each grading period regardless of the educational option the student-athlete has selected. Whether the student is home-schooled; is attending a Community, STEM or non-public school as a non-enrolled student; taking an online credit recovery course; is attending the Career Center, is enrolled in College Credit Plus; is taking Credit flex courses; or any of the other myriad options for students, the school administrator must receive a written accounting of the grades received or evidence of passing the requisite five one credit courses or the equivalent when the grading period of the member school at which the student is seeking eligibility ends.

The OHSAA has developed a collection form for your use in obtaining these grades from the individual instructor(s) who are responsible for the student's education. Click here to retrieve that form:

<http://www.ohsaa.org/Portals/0/Eligibility/OtherEligibilityDocs/CCP.Non-EnrolledStudentGradeSheet.pdf>

On occasion, the OHSAA is asked to provide guidance on how to evaluate completion of a course requirement that is being taken in one of these non-traditional offerings. The Board of Education or governing board of each member school is essentially tasked with that responsibility, but as educators we can provide suggestions. Some school districts set standards for completion, particularly with online or credit flex courses, which require a student to complete a specific percentage of the course at the end of each grading period in order to receive a satisfactory grade. This process keeps students engaged throughout the duration of that course work and deters a student from failing to complete any work during a specific grading period. To assist with these options, we do need to know the duration of the course and the credit to be awarded. When supplied with that information along with the delivery mechanism, we may be able to help you with this determination. Please feel free to consult us if you have any questions.

The bylaw has two exceptions, each of which is explained and includes the information needed to waive the bylaw in accordance with each exception.

Exception 1: The Executive Director's office may waive the requirements of this bylaw provided the student has been **physically** withdrawn or removed from school because of circumstances due to personal accident, illness or family hardship. An appeal for such a waiver must come from the principal of the school and be in writing. The appeal for waiver shall contain documents with school and medical supporting evidence.

This exception recognizes that students who cannot attend school during a grading period or who must take a reduced course load should be provided relief from this scholarship requirement, and thus the standard of passing five one credit courses (or the equivalent), when the reasons for that inability to meet that standard can be verified, should be waived. **Please note that in order for the Executive Director's Office to consider application of this exception, this supporting evidence must be contemporaneous with the decision to withdraw the student from school or reduce the student's course load. Evidence obtained "after the fact" will not be accepted.**

To receive a ruling, please provide the following:

1. A cover letter from the principal or athletic administrator stipulating:
 - a. The circumstances causing the student to be withdrawn totally or removed partially from school. Please describe in detail the accident, illness or family hardship that has contributed to the withdrawal or removal and include the dates when your school took this action to withdraw or remove the student.
 - b. Any contemporaneous medical or other documentation with the cover letter to support the request for an exception.

Exception 2: If a student's failure to meet the requirements of this bylaw are due to an "incomplete" given in one or more courses which the student was taking during the grading period in question, the student may have his/her eligibility restored by the Executive Director's office once the "incomplete" has been changed to a passing letter grade provided:

- a) the failure to complete the required coursework during the grading period was due to calamity day(s), family tragedy, or illness or accident as verified by a physician **contemporaneous at the time of the incident**; and
- b) the "incomplete" was given in accordance with Board of Education/other governing board adopted policies and procedures and is applicable to all students in the school; and
- c) the previously scheduled work and/or exams is/are completed within the time period provided in Board policy for completing work required to convert an "incomplete" into a letter grade; and
- d) there is no evidence that the "incomplete" was given in order to afford the student extended time in order to provide the student tutoring or other educational services simply to avoid a failing grade.

Note: This exception only applies where an "incomplete" has been issued and not a letter grade that is subsequently changed because of the extended time/additional work. **If a high school or 7-8th grade school district/system does NOT have a Board Policy on the Restoration of an Incomplete to a Grade or did not have a policy when this exception was requested, the student shall not be able to avail him or herself of this exception.**

To receive a ruling, please provide the following, and note that this exception only applies when a student has received an Incomplete in one or more courses, not a letter grade:

1. Verification that the student was unable to complete work due to calamity days, illness or accident that is **contemporaneously confirmed** by a physician or a severe family tragedy;
2. Verification that the Incomplete was given in accordance with **Board policy** and available to all students
3. Confirmation that the work has been made up in accordance with Board policy and that grades have been recorded for all incomplete work.
4. Verification that the Incomplete was not given to avoid a failing grade and that no extended time was afforded the student in order to avoid the failing grade.
5. Please provide the student's preceding grading period grade card.

NOTE ON ADMINISTRATIVE ERROR:

Please note that the concept of "substantively eligible", as expressed in Bylaw 4-1-1, Administrative Error, is NOT applicable to this high school and 7-8th grade scholarship standard. **Requests for appeal citing this bylaw shall be denied. Bylaw 4-1-1** reads as follows:

Students who have not met the high school or middle school scholarship requirement are not "substantively eligible;" and a student who fails to register for enough credit hours, fails a class(es) or drops a class that lowers the student below the requisite number of credits, always has a shared responsibility for this shortcoming thus disqualifying such shortcoming from the "due solely to an administrative error" category. Therefore; this Bylaw shall never be used to waive the standards found in Bylaws 4-4-1 or 4-4-5.

Please feel free to contact Deborah Moore or Roxanne Price if you have any questions!