



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Good Conduct/GPA Policies and Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities

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The Iowa Department of Education and the Iowa High School Music Association occasionally receive questions about the application of locally developed Good Conduct or “minimum grade point” policies to students who participate in curricular activities (those activities that are part of the curriculum and which generate grades or academic credit) and co-curricular activities (those activities that are outside of but usually complementing the regular curriculum). The school must balance (1) the interests in ensuring that it is represented by performers who uphold high standards of citizenship and academic attainment with (2) its obligation to ensure that students’ academic records accurately reflect each student’s actual academic achievement.

If a student is a representative of a school in a performance or competition (whether sponsored by the IHSMA or not), a district may permissibly exclude a student based upon violations of a Good Conduct policy or a minimum grade point standard only if it is co-curricular in nature. The district must ask whether the performance or competition is curricular or co-curricular in nature.

Note: The IHSMA defines music events under its jurisdiction as either “competitive” or “evaluative.” If the music event is “evaluative” (ratings are given but schools are not in competition with each other), the IHSMA permits the Academic Eligibility Rule to be set aside if the school has deemed the music event to be curricular. The IHSMA applies the Academic Eligibility Rule to all “competitive” events (events where placings or rankings are given). For that reason, “evaluative” music events may be curricular or co-curricular. “Competitive” music events may not be curricular in nature: they may only be co-curricular.

The answer to that question will determine the district’s next steps.

I. If being excluded from the event or performance due to a Good Conduct or minimum GPA policy violation *will have no effect on a student’s academic record, the activity is co-curricular in nature.* No further action is required, and the district may apply its policy and the IHSMA Academic Eligibility Rule.

II. If being excluded from the event or performance due to a Good Conduct or minimum GPA policy violation *will have an actual or potential negative effect on a student’s academic record, the activity is curricular in nature.* The student may not be excluded from that activity based on application of a Good Conduct or minimum GPA policy. To do otherwise would be contrary to State Board decisions. Penalizing a student by reducing the student’s grades for acts that have no relation to the subject matter being assessed would be an impermissible double punishment and is contrary to the best interest of education. See, e.g., *Audubon Cmty. Sch. Dist.*, 13 D.o.E. App. Dec. 284 (1996); *Dallas Center-Grimes Cmty. Sch. Dist.*, 13 D.o.E. App. Dec 332 (1996); *Algona Cmty. Sch. Dist.*, 5 D.o.E. App. Dec. 270 (1987); see also Larry Bartlett, *Academic Evaluation and Student Discipline Don’t Mix: A Critical Review*, 16 J.L. & Educ. 155 (1987). In *Valentine v. Independent Community School District*, 187 Iowa 555, 174 N.W. 334 (1919), the Supreme Court of Iowa overturned a school district’s decision to withhold earned diplomas and grades from graduates who refused to wear caps and gowns for commencement activities. For this reason, “competitive” music events cannot be used to determine a child’s course grade: application of the IHSMA’s Academic Eligibility Rule may result in a prohibited double punishment.