

APPENDIX 2.2.3: PROMOTION AND GRADUATION POLICY

The mission of Chicago Prep, to prepare scholars to succeed in college and positively impact the world, requires that scholars achieve a high bar of academic preparedness. Academic preparedness will therefore be used to determine promotion from one grade to the next, including graduation from Chicago Prep in 8th grade. We do not promote scholars based on their age or social factors; this policy is in alignment with our mission and vision for our scholars' success, as well as with Illinois law. We firmly believe that **all scholars can achieve academic success**. We believe that promoting a scholar who has not achieved key measures of academic success leaves the scholar unprepared to meet the academic demands of the next grade level. Chicago Prep will consider three major factors when determining whether to promote or retain a scholar: grades, NWEA growth and attainment, and attendance.

1. Grades: Our curriculum is aligned to the Common Core State Standards, designed to prepare students to meet rigorous grade-level standards and remain on track to succeed in college. Because scholar grades are based on assignments and assessments from our curriculum, scholars' grades are the primary indicator of their performance on the Common Core Standards and their academic readiness for promotion to the next grade. Grades in all classes will be composed of the following assignment categories:

Figure 1: Grading Composition for Each Class

Assignment Type	Assignment Description	Weight
Tests and Projects	<p>Tests are summative assessments measuring mastery of standards/content throughout a unit (e.g., unit test) or multiple units (e.g., interim assessment). Tests include a variety of question types, including but not limited to multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, and essays. <i>Scholars will take at least two tests in every class each trimester.</i></p> <p>Projects are major assignments completed over multiple lessons and days of homework. They require scholars to demonstrate mastery of multiple objectives, standards, and/or skills. Examples include essays, speeches and presentations, debates, and final products such as posters or brochures. <i>Scholars will complete at least one project in every class each trimester.</i></p>	30%
Quizzes	Formative assessments measuring mastery of several objectives and/or standards. Quizzes include a variety of question types, including but not limited to multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer. <i>Quizzes are typically given once per week.</i>	30%
Classwork	Assignments scholars complete on a daily basis in every class. Examples include reading and annotating in literacy classes, solving practice problems in math and science classes, and participating in all activities in physical education and art classes.	30%
Homework	Work assigned to scholars each night to practice objectives and standards covered during the school day. <i>Homework is primarily graded based on effort and completion.</i>	10%

Throughout each trimester, scholars will receive grades in all five categories: tests and projects, quizzes, classwork, and homework. Scholars and parents will receive weekly progress reports that include cumulative percentages and corresponding letter grades in all seven content areas: math, literacy, social studies, science, financial literacy and entrepreneurship, art, and physical education/health. Letter grades will be determined the grading scale in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Grading Scale

Points	Letter Grade	Description
97-100	A+	Scholar has mastered the content standards with few or no gaps in understanding or execution.
93-96	A	
90-92	A-	
87-89	B+	Scholar has demonstrated proficiency in the content standards with only minor gaps in understanding or execution.
83-86	B	
80-82	B-	
77-79	C+	Scholar has demonstrated basic competency with the content standards, but still has some gaps in understanding or execution.
73-76	C	
70-72	C-	
60-69	D	Scholar has not yet mastered the content standards and must demonstrate at least basic competency to earn credit.
0-59	F	

Scholars' final grades in a course will be calculated as the average of their three trimester grades. At Chicago Prep, 70% or higher is considered passing. A 70% indicates the scholar has a baseline readiness to begin mastering the skills and content of the next grade level. Our core classes are math, literacy, social studies, science, and Money & Business in Action (MBA), and passing these five classes is an important requirement for promotion.

2. NWEA MAP Growth and Attainment:

Scholars at Chicago Prep will take the NWEA MAP three times a year, in the fall, winter, and spring. NWEA MAP results provide a holistic portrait of a scholar's academic performance because they:

- Indicate the scholar's growth from year-to-year, and from fall to winter to spring.
- Indicate the scholar's absolute mastery of grade-level standards.
- Indicate the scholar's performance relative to grade-level peers.

Our goal is for every scholar to be performing at or above grade level as measured by the NWEA. While NWEA provides an important and well-rounded portrait of a scholar's academic performance, it is a snapshot take on *one* day of an entire year. We believe that a scholar's grades, which indicate progress and achievement, measured daily and weekly throughout an entire school year, provide an overall better indicator of a scholar's readiness for the next grade level.¹ We also recognize that many of our incoming 5th grade scholars, as well as scholars who transfer to Chicago Prep in later grades, may have significant academic gaps that require more than one year to remediate. This is why our grading standards for promotion, requiring students to attain a 70% or higher in rigorous academic classes, are more demanding than our testing standards for promotion.

When weighing NWEA results into promotion and retention decisions, growth is considered just as important as attainment. Therefore, a scholar who is below grade level *may* still be promoted as long as he/she has demonstrated the expected growth from the previous school year and/or the beginning of the current school year. This decision depends on how far below grade level the scholar is and whether the school team believes that repeating the grade will be beneficial for the scholar long-term. Similarly, a scholar who has not demonstrated the expected growth from the previous school year and/or the beginning of the current school year *may* still be promoted if he/she is performing at or above grade level.

¹ This belief is in alignment with the finding that high school grades are better than test scores at predicting college graduation, as cited in Paul Tough's book *How children succeed: Grit, curiosity, and the hidden power of character*. Boston: Mariner Books, 2012.

3. Attendance:

We believe that all scholars need to attend school daily in order to achieve the high academic bar of college readiness. At Chicago Prep, missing even one day of school means that the scholar has missed important content and assignments. Whenever a scholar is absent, Advisors or homeroom teachers will be responsible for calling the parent that day to check in, learn the reason for the absence, and reiterate the importance of attendance by highlighting some of what the scholar will/did miss.

Scholars who have ten or more unexcused absences in a year or fifteen or more total absences (excused and/or unexcused) in a year may be at-risk of retention. At Chicago Prep, half-day absences, which are constituted by a scholar being present for less than five hours of the school day, will be counted as an absence. In other words, if a scholar misses four hours of school on two separate days, that scholar now has one absence. Given the importance of daily attendance, Chicago Prep will communicate with families at each of the absence benchmarks below, at a minimum:

- 3 or more unexcused absences in one trimester; 5 or more unexcused absences total for the year; 9 or more unexcused absences total for the year
- 5 or more total absences in one trimester; 8 or more total absences for the year; 14 or more total absences for the year

Communication will include written notices prepared by the operations team as well as phone or in-person conferences with teachers and/or administrators to reiterate the importance of daily attendance and the impact of attendance on promotion/retention decisions. In addition, weekly progress reports will include scholars' absences for the trimester and the year.

Considering all three factors for promotion and retention together (grades, NWEA MAP growth and attainment, and attendance), the criteria for promotion are summarized in Figure 3:

Figure 3: Promotion Criteria

Grades	NWEA MAP Results	Attendance
Passing (70% or higher) at least four out of five core content classes (math, literacy, social studies, science, and financial literacy and entrepreneurship).	Meeting spring-to-spring growth goal (or fall-to-spring or winter-to-spring, in the absence of scores from the previous spring or fall) AND performing at or above the 30 th percentile. OR Performing at or above grade level (the 50 th percentile).	9 or fewer unexcused absences AND 14 or fewer absences (excused or unexcused)

Promotion and Graduation Policy

Scholars who meet the grading, NWEA MAP, and attendance criteria described above will be automatically promoted to the next grade level. Scholars who fail to meet one or more of the above criteria may be retained, however attendance alone will not be a sole factor for retention. Final decisions for promotion or retention will be made on a case-by-case basis. All staff members who work with a scholar will weigh in on whether or not to promote the scholar. The scholar's parents or guardians will

also weigh in on whether or not they believe their child should be promoted or retained. However, the Head of School will make all final decisions regarding retention/promotion for scholars who fail to meet all of Chicago Prep's promotion requirements. All decisions will be made with the best interests of the scholar in mind. Staff members and families will work together to determine whether promotion or retention will ultimately help or hinder the scholar on his or her path to high school, college, and life success. The graduation criteria is the same as the promotion criteria, applied to 8th grade students. Students who do not meet the graduation criteria but will be 15 years old on or before September 1st of the following school will be promoted in alignment with the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Elementary School Promotion Policy. All scholars Chicago Prep retained will have the option of attending three weeks of summer school, staffed by Chicago Prep teachers. Scholars who meet all summer school requirements, including daily attendance, completion of all assignments, and passing of courses, will be promoted to the next grade.

Communication of Promotion and Retention Decisions

Chicago Prep is deeply committed to establishing and maintaining robust partnerships with families. While final decisions regarding retention and promotion will be communicated on or before the last day of school, teachers and administrators will maintain frequent and consistent communication with all families about scholars' academic progress and attendance. At a minimum, communication of progress and concerns will include:

- 1.** Chicago Prep will send home weekly progress reports that indicate the scholars' grades in all classes, as well as behavior progress throughout the week, as well as his/her daily attendance, including tardiness and early dismissals.
- 2.** Scholars' Advisors will personally communicate (via text message, phone call, and/or email) with all families at least once every two weeks.
- 3.** Scholars' Advisors will hold a phone conference with all families at least once per month.
- 4.** During Trimester 1 and Trimester 2 Report Card Conferences, teachers and/or administrators will let parents know if their child is currently at-risk of retention based on grades, test scores, and attendance. This communication may occur in-person or via phone AND will include a formal letter either shared with the parent in-person or mailed to the home.
- 5.** No later than six weeks before the last day of school, Chicago Prep administrators will communicate with all families of scholars who are at-risk of retention. Administrators will let the families know why the child is at-risk (grades, test scores, and/or attendance), and communicate whether promotion is still possible. If promotion is still possible, administrators will communicate clear next steps (e.g., maintaining a B average for the remaining six weeks in math class, no more missed days of school, meet growth goal on reading NWEA). At this time, administrators will also notify families of the summer school option for scholars who are retained.

On or before the last day of school, the Head of School will let families know if their child is promoted or retained. For scholars who are retained, the Head of School may meet with the families in person or via phone and will send a formal letter explaining the decision.