



Department of Catholic Schools  
Diocese of Oakland

## Parent Guide to Standards-Based Grading



St. Joseph School, affiliated with the Dominican Sisters and an integral part of St. Joseph Parish in historic Mission San Jose, is dedicated to providing a strong Catholic religious formation and a quality academic education for elementary school students. Partners in this endeavor, students, parents, educators, and parish community strive to live Christ's message, empowering service-minded future leaders for Church and community.

**Grades Kindergarten ~Second  
2016 – 2017**

**Grades Third - Fifth  
2017 - 2018**

Mission Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Oakland educate children in the Catholic faith and nurture their minds, bodies, and souls, inspiring them to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ, achieve their highest academic and creative potential, and actively serve and enrich the community. Engage, Educate, and Empower Every Student, Every Day.

Diocese of Oakland Department of Catholic Schools  
2121 Harrison Street  
Oakland, CA 94612

# Parent Guide to Standards-Based Grading

*In the schools of the Diocese of Oakland, we believe student achievement occurs through clearly defined standards and authentic learning opportunities. The schools of the diocese strive to provide accurate, meaningful, and timely feedback to both students and parents throughout the learning process.*

*Reporting of student achievement should reflect student progress toward mastery of key academic concepts and identify multiple pathways to deeper learning.*

**GRADES ARE NOT ABOUT WHAT STUDENTS EARN;  
GRADES ARE ABOUT WHAT STUDENTS LEARN.**

## **Why have we moved towards a standards-based reporting system?**

A report card is an ongoing conversation between the teacher, the student, and the parent or guardian about what is expected of students and how to help them to be successful in a rigorous academic program. For this purpose to be accomplished, however, the reporting system must accurately mirror the instructional model that exists in the classroom. In the past, grades reflected not only what had been achieved academically, but also how students behaved or how they compared with classmates. Reporting systems did not reflect the academic standards and performance assessments that exist in today's classrooms. Our instructional model has shifted away from a focus on basic skills and moved toward a deeper analysis of content that requires our students to think, plan, integrate, and construct. In this environment, the traditional grading system is inadequate.

### **Traditional Report Card**

Subjects are listed by name with one grade given per subject

Letter grades (A-F) reflect an individual teacher's expectations and student achievement with effort as a factor

Curriculum and instruction are teacher centered, textbook driven, and not necessarily aligned to the state standards  
Grading is based on teacher determined criteria

Uses an uncertain mix of achievement, attitude, effort, and behavior; uses penalties and extra credit

Includes every score regardless of when it was collected; scores are averaged  
Includes group work scores

### **Standards-based Report Card**

Major subjects are defined by curriculum or content standards and indicators with a grade given for each learning goal

Numerical levels indicate mastery of the grade level standards. Achievement and effort are reported separately

Curriculum and instruction are aligned with state and diocesan standards

Student work is compared to state and diocesan criteria and student performance is measured against predetermined performance levels

Measures only achievement; behaviors reported separately; no penalties or bonuses given

Emphasizes the most recent evidence of learning  
Includes individual evidence only

## Explaining Standards...

Standards are specified learning goals applied to all students. They provide consistent and clearly defined targets for students, teachers and families to meet. By defining students' academic responsibilities, standards by implication define the teaching responsibilities of the school. At the heart of the standards movement is the belief that effort leads to ability. In other words, the harder students work, the closer they will come to achieving the standard. The standards movement strengthens the classroom ethic. Additionally, standards provide clear expectations. Standards establish for all stakeholders what it is that students are expected to know and be able to do. Sustained effort over time should make it possible for all students to achieve these expectations because the standards always remain constant. The time needed to meet them, however, may vary from student to student. In a standards-based classroom the focus is on student performance, not simply on taking quizzes and tests. Just as artists use portfolios to showcase their talent and a professional educator must first be a "student teacher," our students must be able to demonstrate their competencies through actual demonstrations, performances, and portfolios that show evidence of their learning.

## What is standards-based grading?

Standards-based grading communicates how students perform on a set of clearly defined learning targets called standards. The purpose of standards-based grading is to identify what a student knows, or is able to do, in relation to those learning targets - as opposed to simply averaging grades/scores over the course of the grading period, which can mask what a student has learned or not learned.

<b>Standards-based grading What it is NOT.....</b>	<b>A Standards-based approach includes:</b>
A one time test	Indicates what students know and are able to do
An interim test (benchmark, midterm, final, etc.)	Scores indicate a student's progress toward the attainment of a standard
Average of grades	Clearly communicates expectations ahead of time
Based on percentages	Is based on complex tasks, as opposed to rote memory
Unknown expectations/grades do not necessarily reflect what skills and concepts a child knows	Assessment occurs when appropriate, not just on scheduled days
Factoring homework, extra credit, attendance, bonus points Based on a bell curve	Emphasizes the more recent evidence of learning Multiple methods of grade calculation are used to determine grades

## Why standards-based grading?

Standards-based grading reports what students should know and be able to do within each content area at each grade level. The real-time monitoring of student performance reflects a more accurate picture of student achievement. Other reasons for standards-based grading include:

- Current methods of grading do not accurately indicate what a student knows and is able to do.
  - Students will be able to explain what they learned or did not learn rather than recite a percentage.
  - It can benefit all learners - students who struggle and accelerated learners.
  - Parents are provided information on specific standards while receiving meaningful feedback.
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**What is a Standards-Based Report Card?**

A standards-based report card reports student progress toward meeting the content and performance standards that are set forth by the Diocese of Oakland Department of Catholic

Schools. Benchmarks are used to determine if the student is making progress toward meeting the standards.

Teachers will be assessing students through common benchmark assessments on a regular basis. The report card also provides information on your child's work habits.

The new standards-based report card will look different than the traditional one that has depended on a single letter grade for each subject. Because our schools want to communicate to families what it is we expect students to know and be able to do, every school in the Diocese will utilize a standards-based system, which will give parents more accurate information on their students' progress towards attainment of the content area standards. Students will be held to high expectations, and the goal for all students is to be proficient in all of the standards by the end of the school year. The standards-based report card is extremely helpful because parents can clearly see which big ideas and concepts their child has learned and also what work still needs to be done to make sure their child is ready for the next grade level. The final grade represents the student's most current level of performance.

**Where did the language on the Standards-Based Report Card come from?**

The language is based on the Diocesan Religion Standards, the California Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Math, and the National Next Generation Science Standards.

**How does standards-based differ from traditional grading?**

A standards-based grading system measures a student's mastery of grade-level standards by prioritizing the most recent, consistent level of performance. A student who may have struggled at the beginning of a content or course when first learning new material, may still be able to demonstrate mastery of key content/concepts by the end of a grading period.

In traditional grading systems, a student's performance for an entire quarter is averaged together. Early quiz scores that were low would be averaged together with more proficient performance later in the course, resulting in a lower overall grade than current performance indicates.

Standards-based report cards also separate academic performance from work habits/behavior in order to provide parents a more accurate view of a student's progress in both areas. Effort, participation, cooperation, and attendance are reported separately, not as a part of academic performance.

**How are my student's "grades" determined?**

A student's performance on a series of assessments will be used to determine overall mastery, much as it has in the past. The difference will be reporting of mastery levels instead of numbers or letters ("Developing/Approaching Mastery" instead of "B"). Levels of achievement will be clearly defined. Practice assignments and homework will serve primarily as a source of feedback and instructional support for both students and teachers.

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**When will the Standards-Based Report Card be utilized at St. Joseph School?**

In conjunction with all schools in the Diocese of Oakland, St. Joseph School will begin implementation of SBS during the 2016-2017 school year.

**2016-2017**

First year of implementation for Diocesan Standards-Based Report Card for Grades K-2.

- K-2 teachers will use Standards-Based Grading and Report Card for ELA and Math.
- Academic letter grades will be replaced with number grading system.
- All TK-8 teachers will be at 90/10 Summative vs. Formative when assessing

**2017-2018**

First year of implementation for Diocesan Standards-Based Report Card for Grades 3, 4, & 5.

- 3rd-5th grade teachers will use Standards-Based Grading for ELA and Math.

Second year of implementation for Diocesan Standards-Based Report Card for Grades K-2

- All teachers, K-5 will have fully implemented the Standards-Based System into instructional, grading, and reporting practices.
- All teachers will incorporate Standards-Based Grading for ELA, Math, and Science. Grades 6-8 will continue to use letter grades for reporting purposes.

**2018-2019**

- All K-5 teachers will have fully implemented the Standards-Based System into instructional, grading, and reporting practices for ELA, Math, Science, and Religion..
  - All teachers will be at 100% Summative when assessing for mastery and reported grades.
  - All teachers will incorporate Standards-Based Grading for ELA, Math, Science, and Religion. Grades 6-8 will continue to use letter grades for reporting purposes.
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## What will the Standards-Based report card look like?

The report card will seek to provide meaningful feedback so both students and parents can track progress toward mastery of key academic concepts, as well as reflect upon strengths and weaknesses. In a standards-based approach, parents and students will see consistent grading practices throughout each school—and throughout the diocese. Teachers will grade based on what each student has learned and how that student meets the standards. **In no way does a 4, 3, 2, 1 correlate to A, B, C, D letter grades!**

4	<b>Advanced/ Exceeds Mastery</b>	<p>Using the most recent, comprehensive evidence requiring high levels of cognitive demand, the student exceeds learning target by performing at exemplary levels.</p> <p><i>In addition to exhibiting standard mastery, student applies conceptual understanding to new situations, shows mastery of next vertical standard, offers alternative perspectives, and/or applies higher order thinking skills.</i></p> <p><i>These are not just harder tasks, but learning that requires deeper or more rigorous thinking.</i></p> <p><i>Examples of this type of learning may include: applications for real-world use, teaching another person the material, using information to solve problems in a different context, explaining connections between ideas, demonstrating a unique insight, and/or creative application of skills</i></p>
3.5		<p>Using the most recent, comprehensive evidence requiring high levels of cognitive demand, the student meets and sometimes exceeds learning target as exhibited in performances on basic application, strategic and extended thinking activities.</p> <p><i>The student who scores a 3.5 has not consistently shown exemplary performance on activities that require a high level of cognitive demand.</i></p> <p><i>The student is on track to exceed grade-level standards.</i></p>
3	<b>Proficient/ Mastery</b>	<p>Using the most recent, comprehensive evidence requiring high levels of cognitive demand, the student meets the learning target as exhibited in performances on recall, basic application, strategic and extended thinking activities.</p> <p><i>This level is the focus for the entire proficiency scale</i></p> <p><i>This is the expected level of performance for all students</i></p> <p><i>This level includes essential outcomes, common core and diocesan standards, and related skills and practices</i></p> <p><i>The student exhibits mastery on assessment tasks involving fact and vocabulary recall, conceptual application, and strategic and extended reasoning, such as modeling and problem solving.</i></p> <p>No major errors or omissions with level 2 or 3 elements.</p>
2.5		<p>Using the most recent, comprehensive evidence requiring high levels of cognitive demand, the student almost meets learning targets as exhibited in performances on recall, basic application, strategic and extended thinking activities.</p> <p>The student is on track to meet grade-level standards.</p>
2	<b>Developing/ Approaching Mastery</b>	<p>Using the most recent, comprehensive evidence requiring high levels of cognitive demand, the student is approaching an understanding of the learning target as exhibited in performances on recall, basic application, strategic and extended thinking activities</p> <p><i>This level is the basic learning necessary and serves as the foundation for the higher levels of learning.</i></p> <p><i>Examples of this type of learning may include recall questions, fact-based skills, and basic applications.</i></p> <p><i>The student occasionally meets standards as demonstrated by a body of evidence that shows incomplete/inconsistent understanding and application of grade-level concepts.</i></p> <p><i>No major errors or omissions regarding the simpler details or processes but major errors or omissions regarding more complex ideas or processes.</i></p> <p><i>Does not make connections among ideas nor is able to demonstrate their learning without support.</i></p> <p><i>Exhibits basic understanding of standard on assessment tasks involving fact and vocabulary recall, basic conceptual application, and strategic and extended reasoning, such as modeling and problem solving.</i></p> <p>However, there are major errors or omissions with level 3 elements.</p>

1.5		Using the most recent, comprehensive evidence requiring high levels of cognitive demand, the student is beginning to develop necessary skills to meet the learning target as exhibited in performances on recall, basic application, strategic and extended thinking activities. <i>Some skills are above basic, while some are still in need of intervention</i>
1	<b>Needs Support/ Below Basic</b>	Using the most recent, comprehensive evidence requiring high levels of cognitive demand, the student exhibits limited skills necessary to meet the learning targets as shown in performances on recall, basic application, strategic and extended thinking activities. <i>Student requires more time and experiences; shows limited achievement of the standard(s). The student rarely meets standards as demonstrated by a body of evidence that shows minimal understanding and application of grade-level concepts. Only a partial knowledge of some of the simpler details or processes and/or little to no understanding or skill demonstrated, even with help and support. May be able to complete some low-level assessment tasks involving fact and vocabulary recall with support but struggles on tasks involving conceptual application and strategic and extended reasoning, such as modeling and problem solving.</i>

**X = Standard Not Assessed** - — Standard has not been taught and/or measured to date. This symbol is not used third trimester.

## Characteristics that Support Learning

To accurately communicate to students and families specific information about achievement, grades must be a pure measure of student learning and achievement of the standards.

Characteristics that Support Learning are indicators which describe the student's efforts, actions, behaviors, social skills, and work habits in the school setting and are reported on in a separate section of the report card. Although work habits and social development criteria are reflected separately on the report card than academic achievement, they are still a very important part of communicating to parents about their child's progress. By including effort and habits as a separate reporting category, teachers can more honestly communicate about such matters as behavior, participation, homework and completing assignments without distorting a student's actual academic achievement.

### Grade 1-8 Life Skills (Modified for Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten)

- Completes Quality Work
- Is Prepared to Learn
- Participates in Learning
- Follows Classroom Expectations
- Shows Behavior/Social Development
- Becoming a Faith-filled Christian in the Catholic Tradition, a Lifelong Learner, a Socially Responsible Member of the Community, Well-Rounded Individual with Good interpersonal Skills

Reporting separate grades for academic standards and learning characteristics makes grades more meaningful and students take them more seriously.

### Grading Scale for Life Skills

M = Consistently Meets Expectations

A = Approaching Expectations (Self-correcting and learning skills to independence)

N = Needs Support

### Remember:

**All parts of the reporting standard need to be met with proficiency before a student earns a “Level 3” Proficient/Mastery grade.**

Many of the reporting standards combine several instructional standards. For example, a report card standard may represent four different instructional standards. Before the student can receive a “Level 3”, all four instructional standards need to be met with proficiency. Similarly, a student pilot may pass assessments for takeoffs, flying and navigation, but if the student pilot has not been taught and/or has not yet mastered landing, that student pilot would not be considered proficient and would not receive his/her license.

**Standards-Based Grading does not average, but rather assesses a student's overall body of work –** especially the most recent evidence or artifacts. The grade should reflect what the student has learned.

**In a Standards-based system, teachers always consider the recency of evidence.** The most recent evidence is the most accurate and valid to show a student's current level of proficiency for a standard.

**A “Level 3” is to be celebrated!** A “3” is the goal for students to earn by the end of the school year on all standards.

**A “Level 4” is only** used when a student consistently and independently demonstrates in-depth understanding beyond what was taught and practiced in the classroom and exceeds required performance of the standards.

**Only evidence gathered after learning is completed should be used for reporting purposes.** The academic

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grade should focus on achievement of the standards only. Homework, work habits, behavior and social skills are important and thus reported in a different part of the report card.

**The 4, 3, 2, 1 Standards-Based scale is not synonymous with the A, B, C, D Traditional grading scale.** A Level 4 is not equal to an “A”. Grades and proficiency levels do not correlate with each other. Traditional grading systems average academic and non-academic factors over a grading period.

**Standards-Based grading measures student knowledge over time by reporting the most recent, consistent levels of performance.** Many times a student may struggle when a new concept is first introduced, but then after much practice, the student is able to demonstrate a proficient level of performance by the end of the school year.

## Students with Specialized Learning Needs

Students with Individualized Learning Plans (Catholic school ILPs) and/or Students with Individualized Education Plans (Public school IEPs) all students in the Diocese of Oakland are expected to achieve the same rigorous learning outcomes; the standards are the same in all of our schools for all of our students. Students with exceptional needs may have ILPs and/or public school IEPs that include specific accommodations and/or modifications that enable a student to meet the standards. Students with exceptional needs must be provided with the same opportunity to receive passing grades and advance in grade level with their peers. The same range of grades available to ALL students must be available to students with exceptional needs. Students with exceptional needs may require special services and supports to achieve certain grade-level standards. For students with accommodations, the content of the standard remains the same, but the method for learning and demonstrating mastery of that standard may be adjusted. If a student with consistently implemented accommodations is still not making progress towards achieving the grade level standards (similar to his/her peers who are also progressing towards meeting the standards), then the accommodations are not having the planned impact to remove the barriers (related to the student’s exceptional needs) and other accommodations may be needed. Modification, on the other hand, could mean changing the standard itself, which includes identifying standards that are fundamentally related but also developmentally appropriate. The SST team, including the parents, makes decisions regarding what content areas (if any) require modification of the grade-level standards through the processes described in the Guide for Serving Students With Exceptional Needs. For all students with an ILP, a supplemental report of progress can be provided that identifies which standards are modified, how a student is performing, and the details regarding achievement of the grade. This lets parents and the student know how the student performed on appropriately challenging learning tasks.

Since the Diocese of Oakland schools are using the curricular standards and current level of student performance to guide instruction, it is important to accurately communicate this information to parents. Student achievement towards the standards is reported through progress reports and report cards. It is recommended to use the same verbiage from the standards when writing the narrative. Detailed progress towards the standards may be outlined in a separate, additional report/narrative under a separate cover.

### For example:

A 4th grade student has been assessed and is functioning at a 2nd grade level in reading and math. Through his ILP, the student is receiving modifications and participating in special intervention programs. In order to report how the student is progressing on the 4th grade level standards listed on the report card, an asterisk (\*) should be placed next to the curriculum area to indicate that the curriculum has been modified, and progress towards the standards may be outlined in a separate, additional report/narrative under a separate cover:

### Sample comments from the additional report/narrative:

*While the student continues to need support decoding text at the 4th grade level, with auditory support the student is able to determine the main idea; explain how it is supported by key details, and summarize the text. The student is currently working on the perquisite skills of identifying basic fractions and demonstrating fluency in division facts through 12. The student is working towards expressing fractions, decimals, and percent.*

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## ACCOMMODATIONS AND MODIFICATIONS

Accommodations are changes in how a student learns. Accommodations make it possible for students with learning challenges to access grade level/common core curriculum. They provide different ways for students to take in information or communicate their knowledge to the instructor. Accommodations are changes in presentation, location, timing/scheduling, student response, and/or other attributes which are necessary to provide access for a student with learning challenges to be successful in a classroom environment and which DO NOT fundamentally alter or lower the standard or expectations of the curriculum/standard/test. An accommodation is a change in HOW a student demonstrates understanding.

Some examples of accommodations are:

- Use of manipulatives, and in certain situations, calculators
- Preferential seating
- Rephrasing directions
- Extended time
- Specialized equipment (i.e. enlarged reading materials, overheads)

Modifications are changes in what a student is expected to learn. Modifications refer to changes made to curriculum expectations in order to meet the needs of the student. Modifications are made when the grade level expectations are beyond or below the student's level of ability. The changes are made to provide a student the opportunity to participate meaningfully and productively, along with other students, in classroom and school learning experiences. Changes can be made to grade level, common core standards, test presentation, location, timing, scheduling, expectations, student response, and/or other attributes which are necessary to provide access for a student with exceptional needs to participate in a curriculum/grade level common core standard/test, but may fundamentally alter or change the standards expectation, or expectations of the curriculum/standard/test. Modifications are changes in the delivery, content, or instructional level of subject matter or test.

Some examples of modifications might include:

- Rigor change to match ability
- Varied materials used and expectations accomplished
- Grading changed to Pass/No Pass
- In certain situations, calculator use

This definition of Accommodations and Modifications is from the *Diocese of Oakland Guide for Serving Students with Exceptional Needs*.

Content	Accommodation	Modification
2 <sup>nd</sup> grade Writing 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade: Analyze ideas, select topic, add detail, and elaborates	Student uses a content vocabulary list to support journal writing of scientific observation of bees.	Student draws and labels pictures of scientific observation of bees.
3 <sup>rd</sup> grade Math Represent multiplication as repeated addition, arrays, counting by multiples, and equal jumps on the number	Represent an equation ( $3 \times 4 = 12$ ) by using manipulatives: Build the arrays, use number lines to make equal jumps, draw or build a set model.	3 boxes, 4 apples in each. Build the 3 groups of 4 using manipulatives. Focus on 3 equal groups.
5 <sup>th</sup> grade Reading 5. grade: Analyze appropriateness of a variety of resources and use them to perform a task or investigate a topic.	From a list of resources provided by the teacher, a student highlights key points in several texts.	A 5 <sup>th</sup> grade student reads a 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade level book to gather information for

**English Language Learners**

Students who are English Language Learners come to our communities with a variety of educational backgrounds. Some of these students may require a variety of supports to access the curriculum standards; at times, the educational program for a student may be adjusted to enable the student to acquire more academic vocabulary. Decisions regarding changes to the academic program, assessment, or reporting for students who are English Language Learners should be made in a collaborative manner (including the principal, teacher, learning support coordinator if needed, and parents/ guardians of the student.) If the curriculum standards are modified, this should be noted with an asterisk and described in a separate, additional report/narrative under a separate cover.

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Sample Standards-Based Report Card (Grade 1)

St. Demo 1234 Main St Oakland, CA Principal: Theodore McBragg	 <b>DIOCESE OF OAKLAND</b> 	<b>Student: Jane Demo</b> <b>Grade 1</b> Teacher: Mrs. Massi
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Trimester Report Card  
2015-2016 School Year

COMMON CORE SKILLS ASSESSMENT														
			T1	T2	T3				T1	T2	T3			
English/Language Arts														
Reading and Literature					Speaking and Listening									
Participate in collaborative conversations with peers and adults					3					3	2.5			
Ask and answer questions about key details in a text					3					3	3			
Retell familiar stories using key details w/central message or lesson					3					3	2.5			
Describe characters, setting, major events using key details					3					2.5	2			
Explain differences between books that tell stories/give information					3					3.5	2			
Identify who is telling the story at various points in a text					3					3	2			
Language					Language									
Use story illustrations/details to describe characters/setting/events					3					2.5	3			
Compare/contrast adventures and experiences of character in stories					3					3	3			
Read grade appropriate prose and poetry					3					3.5	3			
Reading Informational Text					Math									
Ask and answer questions about main topic and key details in a text					2					3	3			
Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text					2					3	3			
Describe text connections between individuals/events/ideas/information					2					3	3			
Know/use text features to locate key facts and information in a text					2					3	3			
Use illustrations and words in a text to describe key details					2.5					3	2			
Identify basic similarities/differences between 2 texts on same topic					2					3	2			
Read grade level informational text					2					3	2			
Reading Foundational Skills					Operations and Algebraic Thinking									
Recognize the distinguishing features of a sentence					3					3	2			
Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds					3					3	2			
Distinguish long/short vowel sounds; break words into sound segments					3					3	3			
Know and apply grade level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding					3					3	3			
Decode words, vowel teams, final -e; identify word endings/diagraphs					3					3	3			
Recognize/read grade-approp. irregularly spelled/high frequency words					3					3	2			
Read grade level text with accuracy/fluency to support comprehension					2					3	2			
READING LEVEL					Number and Operations In Base Ten									
					Add within 100 using concrete models					2			3	3
					Mentally find 10 more or 10 less without having to count (10-90)					2			3	3
Writing					Measurement and Data									
Formulate and write an opinion about a topic or book					2					3	2			
Write about a topic in informative/explanatory text					3.5					2.5				
Write narrative with sequenced events					2					3	2.5			
Edit and revise writing adding details to strengthen writing					2					3	3			
Use digital tools to produce and publish writing					3					3	3			
Answer a question w/recalled from experience or gathered information					3.5					3	3			
Write left to right/top to bottom;w/proper spacing & printing legibly					2.5					3	3			
					Geometry									
					Explain, construct and draw a shape when given defining attributes.					2.5			2	2
					Identify two-dimensional and three dimensional shapes					3.5			2	2
					Partition circles and rectangles into two and four equal shares					3.5			3	2

4	3.5	3	2.5	2	1.5	1	Blank
Student exceeds grade level mastery	Student has mastered grade level standards and displays partial mastery above grade level	Student demonstrates grade level mastery	Student is progressing toward mastery of grade level standards and displays mastery of some	Student is beginning to progress toward mastery of grade level standards	Student demonstrates grade level understanding with some support	Student does not yet demonstrate grade level understanding with support	Not Assessed

**Will my student still receive teacher comments on his/her report card?**

Yes. Individualized feedback is an essential component of standards-based grading. Effective feedback is a more useful source of information than simply assigning a numeric value or letter grade to student work. A goal of using standards-based grading is to improve communication between students, parents, and teachers regarding student achievement. Each assessment of a Priority Standard (standards printed on the Report Card) will be accompanied by an Assessment Rubric specifically pointing out a student's mastery of the given standard. This is the best form of communication a parent can have to judge their child's progress. The final assessment to be placed on the Report Card is a reflection of these Assessment Rubrics.

**How will I access my student's report card?**

The classroom teachers will communicate with each student and his/her parents regarding accessing *PowerSchool*. Parents of students in grades 4-8 have access to student grades via the PowerSchool Parent Portal. Parents of students in grades TK-3 receive printed versions of progress reports and report cards..

**Where can I find grade level learning targets?**

We encourage all parents to be informed regarding the academic content and concepts students will learn each year in school. Information on grade-level learning targets can be found on the school's website at the following link: <http://www.stjosephschoolfremont.org>

**What if I have additional questions?**

Please visit with your child's classroom teacher about learning targets and standards-based grading, as well as with your school principal.

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## **Questions & Answers:**

### **How should a student/parent view student grades now that a 4-point scale has replaced the system of A-F?**

You cannot really compare a traditional grading system to standards-based grading. It is like comparing “apples to oranges”. Standards-based grading identifies a standard and indicates whether or not a student is meeting the standard at a given point in the school year. A score of (3) is defined as meeting grade level standards and indicates that a student has demonstrated mastery of the skills that were expected to be learned by that point in the grading period.

### **Is it possible to achieve a grade of 4?**

Yes it is. However, a score of (4) indicates performance that is consistently above what is expected for mastery at that point in the school year. Level 4 work would indicate a much deeper understanding of a standard, the ability to apply that knowledge, make connections and extend learning beyond the targeted goal. If a student is being accelerated in any grade level/subject area with above grade level standards or materials, is that student required to get a 4 on his report card? By definition, level 4 work reflects higher order thinking, application, connection and extension of targeted goals. While being instructed above grade level is not required in order to achieve a (4), students who are taught above grade level have consistently shown mastery of a subject at their current grade level. Achieving a (4) does not preclude a teacher from suggesting areas for improvement in the comment section of the report card. Receiving a (4) does not guarantee that a students’ performance would remain at that level across all reporting periods, or for all course standards.

### **If a student receives 1’s all year, does that mean the student will be retained?**

Intervention opportunities are in place at most of our Catholic schools to support learners who are behind in math and reading. If a student receives 1’s or 2’s, it means his/her work is not yet meeting grade level standards. A number of academic interventions will be offered to those students who are struggling to meet the established standards. Grade level retention is not a practice that is generally supported by research and is only rarely used in grades K-2 and decided in consultation with parents.

### **How will I know if my child needs help?**

Receiving a 1, 2, or IE (insufficient evidence) on a grade report/report card can be a sign that a student is in need of extra support in the areas where they are receiving low marks. This is one benefit of a standards-based report card; areas in need of support are clearly evident.

### **What student evidence determines grades?**

Teachers carefully consider the following in determining progress: independent daily written or oral tasks; application of skills; periodic assessments (quizzes, tests), performance tasks, and teacher-student questioning. Students can retest to show they know the concept or skill. Consistent descriptive feedback (such as benchmark test results, summative unit assessments, Reading A-Z assessments) will be given to let students know what improvements are needed and what they are doing right. The information that provides the most accurate depiction of students’ learning is the most current information. If students demonstrate that past assessment information no longer accurately reflects their learning, that information must be dropped and replaced by the new information.

### **What is the standard of proficiency?**

On a proficiency scale, the standard of proficiency is a 3.0. This means that on an assessment or across a series of assessments, no major errors or omissions regarding any of the information were made. Mastery of the standard has been achieved. A score of 4.0 means that in addition to the proficient performance, the student goes above and beyond to make in-depth inferences and extended applications of what was learned, including connections to other experiences.

### **What does the number scale (4, 3.5, 3, 2.5, 2, 1.5, and 1) on the rubric mean?**

The scores on the scale represent a learning continuum and are NOT equated to grade point average. Each of the levels builds on the others and explains the learning students have to demonstrate in order to earn that score. Students must demonstrate proficiency as they move up the scale. For example a student may not earn a 3 until they demonstrate proficiency of the level 2 concepts or skills. The scale designations are as follows:

- 4 – The student demonstrates an in-depth understanding of the material by completing advanced applications of the material.
- 3.5 – In addition to a 3.0 score, the student demonstrates in-depth inferences and applications with partial success.
- 3 – The student demonstrates proficiency of the targeted knowledge and skills for the grade.
- 2.5 – In addition to a 2.0 score, the student demonstrates partial knowledge of 3.0 elements.
- 2 – The student understands the foundational material, but is still working to master application of the concepts and skills
- 1.5 – The student demonstrates understanding of 2.0 elements with help and independent understanding of some 2 elements.
- 1 – Even with assistance from the teacher, the student shows little or no understanding of the material.

**What about extra credit?**

Extra credit does not measure learning. In a standards-based system, students are actually able to demonstrate their learning in many different ways and timeframes. In a traditional system in which points determine everything, extra credit and extra points will influence a grade and not reflect any additional learning. For instance, a student that has a 2.0 on a specific learning goal may have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning at the 3.0 level. However, in a traditional system in which extra points are simply added in to the overall grade, extra points can be earned regardless of whether or not learning may have occurred.

**Why is averaging scores to determine a grade not the best method?**

Averaging does not always provide an accurate description of what students have learned. Teachers must consider other central tendencies such as median, mode, or new learning replacing old.

**Does retaking a test teach children to do their best the first time?**

In a Standards-Based Education System, students have multiple opportunities to achieve a standard by retaking a test or portions of a test. What does this teach them about the real world where it's necessary to do one's best? In the real world, only people who master certain information or skills are able to receive certain privileges. Our new system puts more focus on student learning, and yes, it allows for multiple attempts for success. It's actually a more accurate reflection of real-world experience, where a person must meet a certain standard before receiving certain privileges. Some "real life" parallels are the ACT, SAT, professional exams—even the driver's test. There are no penalties for the number of attempts on these tests, but failing them gets expensive and wastes time. A person who truly wants the privilege becomes intrinsically motivated to succeed because he or she wants the benefit that goes with passing the test, i.e., getting accepted into a good college, getting licensure in a certain profession—or driving a car.

**And what about cheating and plagiarism? If a student cheats or plagiarizes on a test or assignment, can he or she retake the test or re-do the assignment?**

In this case, the school and/or teacher must separate the behavior from the student's achievement. Cheating and plagiarism is an unethical behavior that the schools of the Diocese of Oakland will not condone. The penalty for plagiarism has ranged from a lowered grade, a zero, and even suspension. These consequences, however, do not often include completing the assignment appropriately. When a student does not have to make up the test or assignment, we send the message that the test or assignment wasn't important, and we let him or her off the hook regarding demonstrating proficiency on that standard. In standards-based grading, students will be expected to retake a test or complete the assignment. In addition, they also will receive the appropriate discipline in accordance with school site and diocesan policy.

**If homework and practice do not count as part of the student's grade, how will we promote the importance of homework?****How will we motivate them to complete it and turn it in?**

When teachers return homework to students with a grade, most students shove it in their backpack or binder and never look at it again. Imagine the enhanced learning opportunity for the student if instead, the teacher returned the homework with two or three meaningful comments rather than a grade? As teachers, we realize that homework and practice tied directly to learning targets is an important component of student achievement. So when teachers use homework as a mechanism for extensive and timely feedback to the student, it conveys the message that homework is important and necessary. Providing students with nonjudgmental written or verbal feedback enables teachers to formatively assess student understanding and provides the student safe opportunities to practice—without judgment.

**Why are we allowing students to turn in late work or re-do work without penalty of a zero?****How does this teach responsibility and accountability?**

In a standards-based system, the emphasis is on learning. When a student doesn't do the work, the inherent consequence is that he or she doesn't learn the content or practice the skill. When we do not allow a student to turn in late work or re-do work, we deny that student the opportunity to grow character traits that are vital to student achievement, such as perseverance and persistence.

If a teacher doesn't accept late work, the teacher sends the message that the assignment had little educational value. It's as if teacher is saying, "Hey, it's okay if you don't do the work, and it's okay if you don't learn the content or skill." As professional educators working to prepare students to successfully navigate the 21st century world, we can no longer accept these messages. Granting a reduced grade or zero doesn't teach responsibility to students who are not intrinsically motivated. It actually allows the student to avoid the accountability of demonstrating what he or she has learned, and it teaches them to shrug off important responsibilities.

**What research has the diocese used in developing standards-based assessment and grading?**

The diocese has utilized research from a number of experts in the field. A resources and reference page is attached.

## Grading and Assessment Definitions:

Assessment: Gathering and interpreting information about student achievement using a variety of tools.

Benchmark Assessment: An assessment that measures a student's achievement level on all standards in a course that will be repeated periodically to check for improvement.

Common Assessment: The same assessment that is given and graded by common grade level/subject classrooms at about the same time to collect data.

Diagnostic Assessment (Pre-Testing) – takes place prior to instruction; designed to determine a student's strengths, knowledge or skills in order to identify student needs. Teachers will communicate these results but not include them in the overall grade.

Formative Assessment (Practice) – Periodic assessment tool for learning that is used to adjust instruction for individual students or a whole class. Includes: quizzes, initial drafts/attempts, homework, and questioning during instruction. Teachers may communicate these results and provide feedback, but not include them in the overall grade.

Grade: A simple, clear, and concrete summary representation of student achievement based on what a student knows at the end of a given time period. The number (or letter) reported at the end of a period of time as a summary statement of student performance.

Mastery: Demonstration of student performance against standard criteria at a pre-established level.

Score: To mark, evaluate, or place a value on a single product as compared to a standard or objective. The number (or letter) "score" given to any student test or performance.

Proficiency Scale: A proficiency scale is a set of descriptions that describes a stage in the development of competence in a standard, typically with a range of 0 to 4.

Standards: Statement that describes what and/or how well students are expected to understand and perform.

Standards-Based Grading: Achievement level based on mastery of essential standards—a grading system where scores denote progress toward the understanding of a specific standard.

Summative Assessment (Assessment of Learning) – designed to provide information to be used in making judgments about a student's achievement at the end of a period of instruction, including quizzes, tests, exams, quarterly assessments, final drafts, assignments, projects and performances. Summative assessments provide measurable evidence of learning and therefore will be counted for the overall grade. Reassessment of summative assessments will be required on any score below a proficient level. When reassessment is offered, all students may reassess.

Test: An assessment intended to measure the student's knowledge or other abilities.

4.0 Rubric: A grading tool to provide feedback on an identified learning goal. The score signifies the knowledge a student has towards that learning goal. It moves from simple (2.0) to more complex (3.0) with a score of 4.0 requiring synthesis and analysis. A score of 3.0 is the proficient level of mastering the targeted learning goal.

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- StandardsToolBox <http://www.standardstoolbox.com/>