Dear Parents and (or) Guardians,

I would like to communicate my process for monitoring students’ progress towards their academic goals. To understand what I use to make a grade, it is necessary to know the difference between formative and summative assignments/assessments.

**Formative assessment**

The goal of formative assessment is to *monitor student learning* to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by instructors to improve their teaching and by students to improve their learning. More specifically, formative assessments:

* help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and target areas that need work
* help faculty recognize where students are struggling and address problems immediately

Formative assessments are generally *low stakes*, which means that they have low or no point value. Examples of formative assessments include asking students to:

* draw a concept map in class to represent their understanding of a topic
* submit one or two sentences identifying the main point of a lecture
* turn in a research proposal for early feedback
* a unit pre-test
* a quiz
* homework

**Summative assessment**

The goal of summative assessment is to *evaluate student learning* at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against some standard or benchmark (our instructional goals).

Summative assessments are often *high stakes*, which means that they have a high point value. Examples of summative assessments include:

* a Unit Test or midterm exam
* a final project
* a paper
* a lab report
* performance task

Information from summative assessments can be used as feedback (formatively) when students or faculty use it to guide their efforts and activities in subsequent courses. Some summative assessments can also be temporarily formative if students would like to be retaught, or show growth and then retest. Summative assessment results are used to create a “**grade**”.

Due to historical and traditional inconsistencies in grading methods from teacher to teacher, even within the same content area; I am working to create a more consistent approach to monitoring each students’ progress.

So what are the different theories and practices in grading and what are the scholars in education saying about each? One of the most prevalent philosophies in grading practice was best summed up by Marzano and Heflebower (2011):

In the traditional system, students acquire points for various activities, assignments, and behaviors, which accrue throughout a grading period. The teacher adds up the points and assigns a letter grade. A variation on this theme is to keep track of percentage scores across various categories of performance and behavior and then translate the average percentage score into a letter grade or simply report the average percentage score (for example, 62.9 percent). These practices provide little useful information about a specific student. A student might have received an overall or ‘omnibus’ letter grade of B, not because he had a solid grasp of the target content, but because he was exceptionally well behaved in class, participated in all discussions, and turned in all assignments on time. Likewise, a student may have received a percentage score of 62.9, not because she displayed significant gaps in understanding regarding the target content, but because she received a zero for tardiness on assignments or for disruptive behavior. In addition to this lack of specificity, one teacher’s criteria for assigning a letter grade of A, for example, might be equivalent to another teacher’s criteria for assigning a letter grade of B, or even lower. In an effort to cure the ills of current grading and reporting systems, many schools and districts across the United States have attempted to implement a standards-based system. (p. 34)

To make grades, we work to design summative assessments that show levels of mastery towards our standards. For example, a math assessment might be written with level 2 questions that assess students’ ability to do pre-requisite skills or knowledge towards a standard, level 3 questions that directly correlate to the instructional standard, and level 4 questions that allow students to show mastery of content beyond the standard.

When students score a 3 or higher, I have confidence they have met the requirements in the standard and are ready for the next level of content in the learning progression. It is important to note that students who are consistently scoring in the nearing proficient, or at level 2, are not meeting the requirements of the standard. As such, I have created a grading scale that reflects this fact. In a true standards-based system, teachers would not give students a letter grade. Because our district has not adopted a true standards-based system, in both practice and reporting, we have translated the 4-point scale into letter grades. Please know that our district is working to support teachers in aligning all instructional practices with prioritized content standards, and that this is a work in progress that will take time to complete. As teachers continue to build our literacy with new standards and work to create assessment materials to match, consistency in grading practices will hopefully improve from teacher to teacher, grade level to grade level, and school to school.

Please see <https://www.mcpsmt.org/Page/12998>, or go to the MCPS homepage-academics-curricula for more information on this process.

Below is my current 8th grade grading scale for all core classes. Note that the current Infinite Campus setting will not allow us to enter Mastery scores of 1, 2, 3, or 4, because the district default is percentage grades, based on a traditional 100%-90% (A), 80%-90% (B), 70%-80% (C), etc. As such, I grade by assigning standards-based scores of 1, 2, 3, 4, or in between values first, then I translate this to a percentage score to enter as a value in Infinite Campus. Confusing? I know! All this means though is that an 85% doesn’t mean a kid got 8.5/10 questions correct, it means they got score of a 3, which is proficient.

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| **Level of Mastery** | **Percent entered in Infinite Campus** | **Letter Grade** |
| **Advanced (4)** | **97-100** | **A+ (100%)** |
|  | 93-96.9 | A |
| **3.5** | **90-92.9** | **A-** |
|  | 87-89.9 | B+ |
|  **Proficient  (3)** | **83-86.9** | **B (85%)** |
|  | 80-82.9 | B- |
|  | 77-79.9 | C+ |
| **2.5** | **73-76.9** | **C (75%)** |
|   | 70-72.9 | C- |
|  | 68-69.9 | D+ |
| **Nearing Proficient  (2)** | **63-67.9** | **D (65%)** |
|  | 60-62.9 | D- |
| **Novice  (1)** | **59** | **F** |

**Any score that is a B and above means students have met the standard.**

Please know I have adopted my practices based on much research and practice and believe these methods most accurately communicate what your child knows and is able to do in relation to the standards our state and district has adopted.

If you have questions, please contact me.

Thank you,

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Carnegie Mellon University, Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence, 2016

Marzano, R. J., & Heflebower, T. (2011). Grades that show what students know.*Educational*

*Leadership, 69*(3), 34-39. Retrieved from

            <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1018479774?accountid=14593>