JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Assessing Learning and Grading Framework
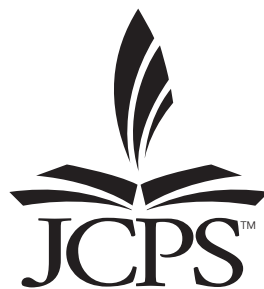
Elementary School   2023-24

JCPS™

Jefferson County Public Schools

Elementary School Assessing Learning and Grading Framework 2023-24

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Introduction

Assessing Learning and Grading Framework Purpose and Principles

The purpose of the *Assessing Learning and Grading Framework* for each level (elementary school, middle school, and high school) is to provide policies and procedures for how learning will be assessed, captured, and communicated. While the *Student Progression and Promotion Handbook* for each level provides policies and procedures for how learners progress through each level and are promoted, the *Framework* focuses on the guiding purposes, principles, and recommended practices for assessing learning and grading.

The *Assessing Learning and Grading Framework* is intended to build a bridge from the Non-Traditional Instruction (NTI) Grading Guidance and our experiences during NTI to our Future State of learning and assessment. The NTI Grading Guidance was created by a broad-based committee of educators seeking to support learners in this new environment. A much stronger emphasis was placed on student progress and mastery, and many educators began to eliminate grades that were solely based on engagement and effort. As the 2021 Student Progression, Promotion, and Grading (SPP&G) Committee work began, each of the level subcommittees realized that they envision a future that primarily values competencies and mastery of standards. To this end, the SPP&G handbooks of the past have been divided into two documents, the *Student Progression and Promotion Handbook* and the *Assessing Learning and Grading Framework*. The *Framework* is focused on assessing learning and grading, with a look to the future, where we will examine and embrace competency-based (including standards-based) grading models.

Our Guiding Purposes for Assessing Learning and Grading:
- Monitoring student progress toward grade-/course-level, or above, standards and competencies
- Informing teaching to improve student learning
- Improving student ability to demonstrate, assess, and develop ownership of their learning
- Communicating the learning, growth, and achievements of learners to learners, families, and stakeholders

Our Guiding Principles for Assessing Learning and Grading:
- Flexibility in meeting the needs of all learners
- Emphasis on learning, growth, and achievements
- Assessment that is learner-centered, authentic, and performance-based
- Grade reporting that is consistent, supports learning, and promotes communication amongst stakeholders
- Assessing progress and mastery will be done in a variety of ways that recognize the strengths and competencies of every learner.
- Communication of engagement will include descriptive feedback, and/or competency-based rubrics, that focus on standards and success skills.

Recommended Practices:
- Performance-based assessments that are learner-centered and authentic
- Descriptive feedback reflecting student engagement
- Student self-assessment and reflection
- Emphasis on progress and mastery
- Supporting and encouraging revisions without penalty
- Use of rubrics and criterion-based feedback
- Formative assessments to determine both learning and next steps in teaching
- Focus on what was learned, rather than how or when
- Timely communication to students and families
- Elimination of "0" point grading due to the impact on overall grades

Key Terms

Learner-Centered Education

An approach to learning, teaching, and assessment in which the perspective, interests, needs, strengths, and agency of the learner are integral to the design of learning and assessment. This includes designing learning experiences and environments with every learner in mind and improving motivation, engagement, and ownership of their learning. Learners exercise voice and choice in their own learning and assessment and are partners in designing their learning journey. They actively grow competencies and mastery of knowledge and skills from academic disciplinary standards through a wide range of authentic, pedagogical approaches, including collaboration, discussion, group projects, and problem solving.

Competency-Based Learning

An approach to learning, teaching, and assessment where learners advance through demonstrated progress toward, and mastery of, key competencies (integrative and interdisciplinary knowledge, skills, and dispositions that can be found and applied within, but also between and beyond, academic disciplinary standards). Learners develop and hone these competencies—such as creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, working collaboratively, communicating effectively, and an academic or growth mindset (for example, our JCPS Success Skills)—over time and through applying them in real-world tasks, contexts, and/or with authentic purposes. This approach often includes a flexible pace, sequence, progression, and/or means in which learners can demonstrate they have reached key milestones along the path to demonstrating mastery of key competencies.

Standards-Based Learning and Grading

An approach to learning, teaching, assessment, and grading that is based on students demonstrating understanding or mastery of academic disciplinary standards. Learning and progress are determined in comparison to these standards (concise, written descriptions of what students are expected to know and be able to do within an academic discipline). The criteria used to determine progress toward "meeting a standard" is defined in advance, often in a rubric, and teachers will evaluate learning progress and academic achievements in relation to these criteria. Grades for behaviors and work habits are important but are often reported separately from academic grades.

Authentic Performance Assessment

These are assessments in which learners demonstrate learning by applying their competency, knowledge, and skills by creating products and performances that relate to experiences of the real, professional, and civic world.

Educators and students will often use collaboratively developed purposes or goals, scoring guides, rubrics, and other methods to evaluate whether the performance or product demonstrates that students have learned to the expected standards. Authentic assessments not only are useful for determining what has been learned previously but also are themselves a meaningful learning experience. Some common authentic performance assessments include defense of learning, capstone and community-service projects, student-led portfolio conferences, exhibitions of learning, and many types of authentic writing.

What Does This Mean for Learners, Educators, and Families?

It means moving away from a traditional grading system that:	It means moving toward a competencies-/standards-based assessment approach that:
• Is primarily designed to **communicate** how learners do overall, **when compared to each other**.	• Is designed to **communicate** the level of learning and/or **progress made in relation to the criteria of many standards and competencies**.
• Often **does not communicate criteria for success**.	• Has clearly identified and **publicly communicated criteria for success** in standards and competencies.
• Converts learning to points/percentages on a **100 percent grading scale** that **does not explicitly communicate the learning and/or progress** toward demonstrating standards and competencies.	• Clearly and transparently **communicates learning and/or progress** toward demonstrating competencies and standards via **criterion-based rubrics**.
• Includes **incomplete work** and **the use of zeros**, which results in very low scores and emphasizes **task completion** more than accurately reflecting learning and/or progress.	• **Explicitly and consistently communicates the level of learning and/or progress** in a few criterion-based categories, avoiding the masking and distorting effects of averaging and using zeros.
• **Combines and averages** a variety of **learning achievements with effort, engagement, behavior, and possibly late penalties and/or extra credit** to determine a **final composite grade**.	• **Reports a variety of DISTINGUISHABLE learning achievements**, which build into milestones along the path of progressing toward mastery, while **describing learner engagement and/or behaviors separately**.
• **Emphasizes WHEN a task is completed/turned in without communicating WHAT learning or progress has occurred** (with less flexibility in **HOW** learning/progress is demonstrated by the learner).	• **Emphasizes WHAT learning or progress toward a standard/competency has been demonstrated** (with more flexibility in **HOW** and **WHEN** the learning/progress is demonstrated by the learner).
• Conceives of **time as the constant** and **learning as the variable**.	• Conceives of **learning as the constant** and **time as the variable**.
• Focuses learners more on **"What did I get?"** and **"How did I do compared to other students?"**	• Focuses learners more on "**What did I learn?**" and **"What can I do?"**

Board of Education Policies

Students With Disabilities (Board Policy 08.22)

In cases which involve students with disabilities, the procedures mandated by federal and state law for students with disabilities shall be followed.

Notification of Student Performance (Board Policy 08.221)

Parents/Guardians shall be notified annually of the procedures used to evaluate the academic performance of students. If a student is exhibiting unsatisfactory performance or is experiencing changes in performance, parents/guardians must be notified in a timely manner prior to the distribution of the progress report or report card.

Student Conferences (Board Policy 08.221)

Teachers shall be available for conferences requested by students. Teachers may initiate such conferences without a student request when the need is evident.

Parent Conferences (Board Policy 03.1332 and 0.8221)

Certified employees shall be available for conferences requested by parents. Reports to parents shall include provision for a parent or teacher request for a conference. Such conferences shall be scheduled at a mutually agreeable time to the extent possible. The Board shall endeavor to provide for parent-teacher conferences within the school calendar.

Parents shall be encouraged to attend two (2) parent-teacher conferences annually.

Homework (Board Policy 08.211)

Each school shall establish guidelines for out-of-school assignments. These guidelines shall encompass amounts and types of reasonable homework assignments by grade level.

Homework shall be assigned for the improvement of learning. Curriculum-related assignments shall not be used for disciplinary purposes. Assignments should have meaning for the student, should be clear and specific, and should be of an amount and type that may be accomplished in a reasonable period of time.

Categories of Academic Grades

Evidence of student learning and growth is to be reported based on student work and/or performance that demonstrates progress toward and/or acquisition of standards and competencies (Success Skills) and thus reflects what the student has learned and/or is able to do. Teachers will also offer students descriptive feedback regarding student engagement with competencies (Success Skills) and standards, but student engagement is not included in the determination of a grade. Student learning and growth must be represented with a variety of sources and kinds of evidence/assignments. Participation points are not attendance points, and academic grades are not reduced as punishment for misconduct or inappropriate behaviors. Teachers must ensure that all students have equitable access and opportunities to complete class and homework and provide support for students to overcome barriers. A copy of the teacher's reporting procedures must be provided to students, parents/guardians, and the principal/designee.

Categories of Academic Grades (must include both)	Evidence/Assignments for Each Category (Examples include, but are not limited to, the following.)
Student Progress Toward Standards and Success Skills: • Shall count for between 10% and 30% of the total academic grade.	Homework, problem solving, class assignments, quizzes, anecdotal records, rubrics, projects, student self-assessment, demonstrations of learning, defenses, and/or other evidence of student progress
Student Mastery of Standards and Success Skills: • Shall count for between 70% and 90% of the total academic grade.	Tests/Proficiency assessments, projects (e.g., project or problem-based), performance assessments, rubrics, demonstrations of learning, authentic assessments, presentations/defenses, or other evidence of student mastery
• Teachers must use both categories listed above (Progression and Mastery) when setting up their gradebook, Infinite Campus, or other electronic gradebook. • No one assignment can count for more than one-third of an entire category (Progression and Mastery).*	

Descriptive Feedback	Evidence/Assignments (Examples include, but are not limited to, the following.)
Student Engagement With Standards and Success Skills: • Shall be communicated through descriptive feedback.	Participation, group work, class discussion, journals/logs/notebooks, rubrics, projects, teacher observation, student reflection, demonstrations of learning, defenses, and/or other evidence of student interaction

It is recommended that teachers consider grading with a criterion rubric that reflects the progression of a skill or competency, rather than completion of a task. The focus should be on providing meaningful work rooted in standards and giving ongoing, descriptive feedback that allows students to continue to improve rather than focusing on assigning a grade. These guidelines are designed to support everyone in taking steps toward a more mastery, standards-based approach. Standards-based grading marks and performance descriptions are encouraged instead of or before converting to a percentage-based grading scale. The use of "zeros" for missing work is discouraged, as it does not reflect learning or growth. Teachers should consider using an "incomplete" indication if necessary.

*Special area teachers shall ensure that both of the two categories are represented; however, special area teachers' grades may not always include a variety of evidence/assignments in each category.

Explanation of Learner Progress

This handbook is reviewed and approved annually by the Jefferson County Board of Education (JCBE) and shall be used by schools for the assessment of individual student progress. Student progress for core subjects is reported using the following performance codes:

Primary Program (Kindergarten–Grade Three)

O......... Outstanding—work consistently exceeds grade-level expectations/standards.

S .... Satisfactory—work meets grade-level expectations/standards.

NI .... Needs Improvement—improvement is needed to meet grade-level expectations/standards.

U .... Unsatisfactory—work does not meet grade-level expectations/standards.

I........... Incomplete—an incomplete may be utilized if a student has not had ample opportunity to access and/or demonstrate learning of a competency, skill, and/or standard.*

N/A .... Not Applicable—not taught this nine-week period

Intermediate Program (Grades Four and Five)

A...........Above Standards 90–100%

B...........Meets Standards 80–89%

C ....Approaching Standards..70–79%

D ....Below Standards 60–69%

U ....Substantially Below Standards..Below 60%

I........... Incomplete—an incomplete may be utilized if a student has not had ample opportunity to access and/or demonstrate learning of a competency, skill, and/or standard.*

Student progress for special areas is reported using the following performance codes:

Health and Physical Education, Visual and Performing Arts, and Other Special Areas (Primary–Grade Five)

O......... Outstanding—work consistently exceeds grade-level expectations/standards.

S .... Satisfactory—work meets grade-level expectations/standards.

NI .... Needs Improvement—improvement is needed to meet grade-level expectations/standards.

U .... Unsatisfactory—work does not meet grade-level expectations/standards.

I........... Incomplete—an incomplete may be utilized if a student has not had ample opportunity to access and/or demonstrate learning of a competency, skill, and/or standard.*

N/A .... Not Applicable—not taught this nine-week period

*Incomplete Resolution Deadline—All incompletes must be updated/resolved to academic grades prior to the conclusion of the following grading period or if a student withdraws, whichever comes first. Incompletes are not allowable during the final grading period of the school year.

Explanation of Process Codes

Primary and Intermediate

4.......... Consistently and independently

3.......... Frequently

2.......... Sometimes

1.......... Rarely

Standards-Based Reporting

For schools using standards-based reporting, the following conversion chart should be used to connect the standards-based reporting scale to the Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) grading scale:

Letter Grade	Standards-Based Reporting Marks	Grading Scale	Performance Description
A	4	90–100	Above Standards
B	3	80–89	Meets Standards
C	2	70–79	Approaching Standards
D	1	60–69	Below Standards
U	-	Below 60	Substantially Below Standards

Competency and Standards-Based Reporting

Philosophy

In order to maintain a collaborative relationship within a school's learning community, the following process should be followed when making significant changes to a school's report card in order to report progress on competencies and standards:

1) The principal shall form a report card committee, with a representative membership, including school-based educators and parents/guardians.

2) The report card committee shall work with the District-based Assessing Learning and Grading Framework team and Teaching and Learning leaders to assess school values and utilize a competency and/or standards-based progress reporting system, parent and family communication plans, and other supporting structures.

3) The committee's decisions will be subject to the approval of District leadership, as applicable, and does not supersede JCBE Policies, administrative procedures, and reporting formats.

Procedure

Communication with students and families concerning student progress is critical. Report card grades are determined and recorded at the end of weeks 9, 18, 27, and 36 of the school year. Grades are posted to students' transcripts so receiving schools can access data regarding students who enroll in a new school. The JCPS District-approved report card is distributed to students following every nine-week grading period. Explanatory comments shall accompany all below-standard grades on the report card. If a student is not making satisfactory progress, parents/guardians must be notified by phone or in writing by the teacher at least two weeks prior to the end of the grading period. Parent contact must be documented by the teacher. An intervention plan must also be developed and implemented to assist struggling students.

Concerns regarding a grade are to be directed to the teacher first. If the concern is not resolved, the parent/guardian shall request a meeting with the teacher and a counselor/assistant principal to discuss the concern. If the concern is not resolved at the meeting, a meeting with the principal is scheduled. The principal will review documentation and inform the parent/guardian of the decision regarding the appeal. This is the final step in the grade reporting appeal process. In cases that involve students with disabilities, the procedures mandated by federal and state law for students with disabilities shall be followed.

The Individual Education Program (IEP) for Exceptional Child Education (ECE) students and Program Services Plans (PSPs) for Multilingual Learners (MLs) may be considered in the appeal.

In addition to completing report cards, teachers collect, maintain, and analyze data to determine if a student with disabilities is making expected progress toward IEP goals using the IEP progress report. This progress report is sent to parents/guardians on the same report card schedule as specified by the District for all students.

Explanation of Academic Grades—Traditional Program Option

Reporting of student progress for students enrolled in the District's Traditional School Program may be based on the following key:

EP....... Excellent Progress

GP ...... Good Progress

SP....... Satisfactory Progress

LP .... Little Progress

PB........Progress Below Age-Appropriate Expectations

I...........Incomplete—an incomplete may be utilized if a student has not had ample opportunity to access and/or demonstrate learning of a competency, skill, and/or standard.*

For **grades four and five**, academic grades are based on a percentage score. An explanatory message to parents/guardians accompanies any grade below C.

A 90–100%

B 80–89%

C 70–79%

D 60–69%

U .... (Unsatisfactory) Below 60%

I...........Incomplete—an incomplete may be utilized if a student has not had ample opportunity to access and/or demonstrate learning of a competency, skill, and/or standard.*

Grades for conduct, work and study habits, and participation in special area classes (health and physical education [PE], visual and performing arts, and other special area classes in grades four and five) are designated as follows:

O......... Outstanding

S .... Satisfactory

NI........ Needs Improvement

U .... Unsatisfactory

I...........Incomplete—an incomplete may be utilized if a student has not had ample opportunity to access and/or demonstrate learning of a competency, skill, and/or standard.*

Students with an NI, D, or U report card grade in any core content area shall receive clarifying comments in Areas for Growth or other report card comment area.

Report card grades are to reflect these instructional and assessment accommodations without limiting the student from earning the highest grade in the content area. Students shall not receive grades of "D" or "U" on assignments solely based on their English proficiency level. A student could receive a "D" or "U" only if the student's lack of performance on appropriately modified or accommodated work warrants such a grade.

*Incomplete Resolution **Deadline**—All incompletes must be updated/resolved to academic grades prior to the conclusion of the following grading period or if a student withdraws, whichever comes first. Incompletes are not allowable during the final grading period of the school year.

Exceptional Child Education Program

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) does not address standards of promotion or retention for students with disabilities. Generally, IDEA does not require the Admissions and Release Committee (ARC) to make the decision on promotion or retention. If the student is on track for a regular diploma, the ARC does not determine if the student will be retained. For students who are on Alternate Assessment or those who plan on staying enrolled until 21 years of age, please contact the school's Exceptional Child Education Implementation Coach for further information. Determining if a student with disabilities will be promoted or retained shall be a collaborative process with the parent/guardian, school administrator, special education teacher, and others who are knowledgeable about the student's educational needs and disability. A retention or promotion decision is not the same as placement decisions for IDEA purposes. Students with IEPs are to receive the specially designed instruction and supplementary aids and services as described within the IEP. If a student with a disability is not making progress, the ARC may need to reconvene to determine if additional instruction or supports are needed. Students with disabilities are to be provided a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

Nothing in this framework replaces or substitutes any student rights as guaranteed by IDEA or state law. Students with a disability will always be entitled to the rights and protections afforded to them by state and federal law.

For information regarding students with disabilities, including students in the referral process, please refer to the JCPS *Exceptional Child Education Procedures Manual* available on the JCPS website, 707 KAR 1:002 to 707 KAR 1:380, and Federal Regulation 34 F.R. Part 300.

Parents/Guardians may also request a copy of the above information by contacting their school's administration or the Chief of Exceptional Child Education at **(502) 485-3890**, VanHoose Education Center, 3332 Newburg Road, Louisville, KY 40218.

Additional Considerations and Requirements for Multilingual Learners

Classroom teachers design and modify instruction, assignments, and tests based on students' English language proficiency levels in reading, writing, listening, and speaking as determined by the English Language Proficiency Screener or Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) assessment.

JCPS believes in an asset-based approach to education. "As part of its asset-based belief system, WIDA uses the term 'multilingual learners' to describe all students who come in contact with and/or interact in languages in addition to English on a regular basis….in an effort to encourage the field to use terminology that is asset-based and inclusive." (WIDA, 2020, p. 11). JCPS believes this shift in terminology is important as well. The term *Multilingual Learner* (ML) will be used throughout this document; however, in some instances in this document, the term *English Learner* (EL) is used for policy purposes.

MLs receive instructional and assessment accommodations in the classroom while being instructed with Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS) on grade level. A student's Program Services Plan (PSP) outlines the instructional and assessment accommodations that must be implemented.

The World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) English Language Development Standards are to be used as a tool to provide greater access to the KAS. The WIDA Can Do Descriptors highlight examples of what MLs can do at each English proficiency level. It is a grade-specific resource designed to guide teachers in planning meaningful activities with MLs, including Newcomer MLs (MLs who are in their first or second calendar year of enrollment in a U.S. school and who score below a 2.5 overall ACCESS score).
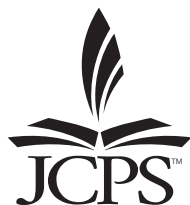
Federal guidance states that MLs, including Newcomers, are to be provided standards-aligned instruction that is "rigorous, grade-level appropriate, and provides deliberate and appropriate scaffolds," including assessment and instructional accommodations.

Report card grades are to reflect these instructional and assessment accommodations without limiting the student from earning the highest grade in the content area. Students shall not receive grades of "D" or "U" on assignments solely based on their English proficiency level. A student could receive a "D" or "U" only if the student's lack of performance on appropriately modified or accommodated work warrants such a grade.

Glossary

ARC.. Admissions and Release Committee

Assessment .... The evaluation of progress and/or achievement made by an individual or group

ECE ....Exceptional Child Education

EL ....English Learner

IEP ....Individual Education Program

Intermediate Program... Grades four and five constitute the Intermediate Program.

Intervention......................... Implementation of strategies and services to students not performing at grade level

KAS...Kentucky Academic Standards

LEA .... Local Education Agency—The term for a school district in federal law and regulation. JCPS is an LEA.

ML .... Multilingual Learner

PSP ....Program Services Plan

Primary Program ....The part of elementary school in which students are enrolled from the time they begin Primary (formerly kindergarten) until they are ready to enter grade four

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