



***EMPOWERING A CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE***

# Grading Guidelines for Elementary Schools

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## Volusia County Schools Elementary Grading Guidelines

The goal of Volusia County Schools is for all students to achieve academic success. The following four components should be present as assurance that high levels of learning exist for all students. This assures high levels of learning for all students.

1. Highly effective core instruction
2. Systematic identification of each student's level of success during instruction
3. A multi-tiered system of supports to ensure that all students learn
4. Accurate and meaningful reporting of student achievement

### **Section 1. Initial Instruction:**

Teachers and students must have clear expectations of the course standards as defined in the Volusia County Schools curriculum maps and Florida course descriptions located at <https://www.cpalms.org/>

- Learning targets are clearly articulated (e.g., posted on board, described in rubrics).
- Instruction is scaffolded to meet the grade level standards and benchmarks.
- Assignments and assessments are aligned with the rigor of the standards.

### **Section 2. Assessment Types and Calculation Method:**

Teachers gather assessment information to make instructional decisions and to communicate a student's academic progress. It is the **purpose** and **timing** of the assignment that determine whether it is diagnostic, formative, or summative.

The purpose of **diagnostic** assessment is to:

- provide information on learner readiness for differentiated instruction.
- target areas for intervention, ongoing progress monitoring, and enrichment.

The purpose of **formative** assessment is to:

- provide evidence on recent performance and patterns of learning.
- respond to student learning needs and differentiate instruction accordingly.
- provide feedback to students on their progress.

The purpose of **summative** assessment is to evaluate student learning at the end of a unit, concept or standard.

**Weighted Categories** in the *Gradebook* will be set using the following calculation method:

- Diagnostic assessments count 0% (not counted in the total grade)
- Formative assessments count 40% of the total grade.
  - ◆ Examples: rough drafts, classwork, topic checks, quizzes, part of a project
- Summative assessments count 60% of the total grade.
  - ◆ Examples: final drafts, unit assessments, projects

### **Section 3. Assessment Guidelines, Grading Practices and Procedures:**

Educators use report card grades to share information with parents and students. Report card grades also play a role in higher education, career opportunities, promotion and retention decisions and may be used to identify students for evaluation of special programs and services.

Grades on individual assessments and report cards should reflect students' achievement of standards.

- A minimum proficiency level criterion for assessments is **70%** or higher
- One single assignment or assessment should not be heavily weighted (more than 30%) to “make or break” a student's grade.
- Students should have a minimum of 3 summative assessments each quarter for each subject.
  - An exception may be made for Special Area teachers who see students less frequently. In these cases, one grade prior to midterm and another at the end of the quarter are the minimum requirements per grading period.
- To support the development of foundational skills in early learners, grades K-2 may use solely formative assessments to report student progress.
- Multiple formative assessments in a 9-week period are recommended.
- Every summative should have similar maximum value points.
- One retake for each summative assessment may be given to all students upon request by parent, student or teacher following remediation of the standards.
  - If opting to use the same assessment as the retake, the assessment may NOT be reviewed with the student prior to the retake.
  - When a student's score on a retake is less than the original score, the higher score is to be used.
- Recommended best practice would be to establish consistency within grade levels at the school site.
- Students and parents need timely and accurate feedback to effectively monitor progress.
  - The Gradebook should be updated weekly (except in the case of extensive assignments or unusual circumstances).
  - Grades of “0” (zero) or “M” (Missing) should not be entered in advance of assigning work to students.
    - “0” (zero) is used when the score on the assignment is a 0 (calculates as a 0 in Gradebook)
    - M” is used to indicate a missing assignment (calculates as a 0 in Gradebook)
- Students must be able to make up work that is assigned on the day(s) of absence. Students must have the opportunity to earn full credit for make-up assignment(s). The teacher shall specify a reasonable period of time for completion of make-up work. In no case shall the time be less than one full calendar day for each day missed. The principal shall have the authority to modify these conditions in the case of a confirmed hardship.
- Nonacademic behavior (conduct, effort, and meeting deadlines for work submission) should be reported separately from achievement grade.

**Teacher's Authority to Override Final Grade:** Teachers have the authority to override final grade to benefit the student if a student's overall performance warrants it.

### ***Homework Policy 309***

Each school shall have a homework policy which ensures that students will have home assignments which reinforce and enhance student learning. Homework will not be assigned as a disciplinary consequence.

### **Section 4. Intervention and Remediation**

The focus of instruction should be getting students to achieve their full learning potential. When students demonstrate a lack of proficiency on benchmarks, they must receive intervention(s), which may lead to assessment retakes or alternative assignments aligned to the non-proficient benchmarks. *Proficiency is defined by the state of Florida and in the Student Progression Plan as 70% or higher.*

When considering the need for intervention and/or remediation, there are several factors that impact educational outcomes and student performance. This framework is the foundation of the Multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) Team process.

It is the ongoing responsibility of the teacher to identify, as soon as possible, to the principal/designee and parents/guardians, those students who do not appear to be making satisfactory progress toward achieving grade level objectives. For these students, the teacher should reference the district's progress monitoring plan on interventions. When the progress monitoring plan is unsuccessful in meeting the student's needs, the student should be referred to the school's Multi-Tiered System of Support Team (MTSS). This team will further analyze barriers to academic success, develop targeted interventions, monitor the student's response to interventions, and refer for evaluation if deemed appropriate.

### **Section 5. Guidelines for Grading Exceptional Student Education**

#### **State and Federal Law Requirements:**

- School districts must regularly inform parents of their child's academic progress. Florida Statute 1008.25 outlines the requirements for public school progression, remedial instruction, and reporting requirements. The law requires the monitoring of progress for students enrolled in Exceptional Student Education (ESE) programs and these students must receive reports of progress at least as often as general education students. Reporting **must also** include progress toward IEP goals, in addition to achievement toward Florida Standards.
- Students with disabilities may not be discriminated against because of their disability in grading and reporting of progress.
- Schools will not arbitrarily assign lower weights to grades given in ESE courses.
- Students with disabilities participating in the general education curriculum must be **consistently** provided with all accommodations for instruction and assessment identified on the IEP in all instructional settings.
- Students with disabilities must not be penalized with a lower grade for using accommodations.
- Students with disabilities cannot be excluded from honor roll based solely on the account of their disability or participation in an ESE class.
- The assessment process should reflect the modality the students are able to demonstrate in learning and be minimally impacted by the disability.

From: Grading Policies for Students with Disabilities:

<http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7571/urlt/0086206-y2006-11.pdf>

#### **Other Considerations for Best Practice:**

- Students with disabilities **may not** be given a failing grade if curriculum, instructional strategies, materials, and assessments have not been accommodated and/or modified (if

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necessary) to meet their individual learning needs.

- Students with disabilities may not be given a failing grade if specialized instruction, as indicated on the IEP, has not consistently occurred to support progress toward proficiency of the standard.
- Students with disabilities should be provided with flexible ways to demonstrate learning instead of a “one size fits all” approach to assessment and grading.
- One single assignment or assessment should not be heavily weighted to “make or break” a student’s grade.

### **Determining Grading System:**

All students with disabilities should be given grades that reflect student progress towards established learning criteria and grade level standards.

### **Students working toward grade level standards with specialized instruction, supports, and accommodations:**

Students with disabilities enrolled in a general education course are graded on achievement toward grade level standards and must be provided all required instructional and assessment accommodations as well as specially designed instruction as indicated on the IEP. Assignments, student products, and assessments may be differentiated according to student needs in addition to following a framework for Universal Design for Learning (UDL). ESE teachers work collaboratively with the general education teachers to provide evidence toward proficiency of grade level standards.

### **Students working significantly below grade level with intensive specialized instruction, supports, accommodations:**

Some students with disabilities may be working significantly below grade level and must be provided with intensive supports including, specially designed instruction and accommodations, to show progress towards grade level Florida B.E.S.T. Standards. Students are graded on achievement toward grade level standards and established learning criteria as indicated on the IEP. These students may receive services in a general education classroom, separate class, or combination of both for one or more subjects. ESE teachers and general education teachers should collaborate to determine what to include in the student’s grade based on instruction provided by both teachers for a particular subject. Students who participate in an ESE separate class for a whole subject, will be provided a grade from the ESE teacher.

### **Students with a significant cognitive disability determined eligible to participate in Florida Standards Alternate Assessment:**

- Students are instructed, assessed, and graded based on the Florida Standards Access Points, according to the level of complexity identified for each student.
- Teachers will use the District Reporting and Monitoring Documents and follow guidelines for distribution of Interim/Report cards as established by the district reporting calendar. With the approval of the school principal, a supplement to the standard report card may be used to report progress in more detail.

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### District Reporting Documents:

- Teachers will use the District Reporting and Monitoring Documents and follow guidelines for distribution of Interim/Report cards as established by the district reporting calendar for all students.
- Case manager/ESE teacher will complete the IEP Goal Progress Report quarterly and provide to the parent/guardian at the end of each grading period.

### Section 6. Guidelines for Grading English Language Learners (ELLs)

#### Helpful Links:

- WIDA Can Do Descriptors (bottom left) <https://wida.wisc.edu/teach/can-do/descriptors>
- ESOL strategies (resources tab) <https://wida.wisc.edu/resources>
- Accommodations Rule: <https://www.flrules.org/gateway/ruleNo.asp?ID=6A-6.09091>

#### Consent Decree Requirements:

- ELL students shall have equal access to educational programs which include both intensive English language instruction and the basic subject matter areas of math, science, social studies, and computer literacy which is understandable to the ELL student given his/her level of English language proficiency and equal and comparable in amount, scope, sequence and quality of instruction provided to English proficient students.
- Teachers must document that ESOL strategies and accommodations are being used and students are learning and progressing.

#### General Grading Guidelines for English Language Learners:

- Teachers **will not** assign lower grades due to lack of English language acquisition.
- ELL students **must** be provided with strategies and accommodations **in all subject areas**.
- English Language Learners must be given grades that reflect the work they can complete based on their English language proficiency level.
- ELL students **may not** be given a failing grade if curriculum, instructional strategies, materials, and assessments have not been accommodated to meet their language needs and documentation of such strategies and accommodations are not available.

#### Grading ELLs in all Content Areas and Electives:

- **English Language Learners shall be graded according to the WIDA Can Do Descriptors for Florida Standards.**
- **Volusia assessments cannot negatively impact grades based on English language proficiency to measure mastery of content.**

#### Statewide Accommodations for ELLS:

Accommodation Rule: <https://www.flrules.org/gateway/ruleNo.asp?ID=6A-6.09091>

- Flexible Setting
- Flexible Scheduling
- Limited Assistance in Heritage Language (see link above)
- Approved Dictionary and/or Glossary (word to word dictionaries)

### Strategies

Strategies refer to skills or techniques used to provide comprehensible instruction and assist in learning. Strategies are individualized to suit the English language proficiency level of the student and to ensure that the student understands the instruction.

### Section 7. Dual Language Program Grading Guidelines

Teachers should use instructional strategies, materials, and assessment instruments that will allow Dual Language students to access instruction according to their level of target language proficiency.

#### General Grading Guidelines for Dual Language Learners:

- **Teachers will not assign lower grades due to lack of target language proficiency on grade level standards.**
- **Dual Language students shall be graded according to the WIDA Can Do Descriptors, the Florida Standards and the WIDA Spanish Language Development Standards.**
- ELL grading guidelines apply for ELL students in the Dual Language Program.
- Dual Language learners should be given grades that reflect the work they can complete based on their target language proficiency level.
- Dual language students may not be given a failing grade if curriculum, instructional strategies, materials, and assessments have not been accommodated to meet their target language needs and documentation of such strategies and accommodations are not available.
- **ELA final grade for each quarter and end of the year shall be a collaborative effort between the ELA teacher and the SLA teacher.**
- Content knowledge should be assessed in the language of instruction through various means (oral questioning, written work, etc.) in addition to the district and state required assessments.

### Section 8. The Use of *In Progress* (I)

- One way teachers may designate progress is with traditional letter grades.
- A second option allows teachers to use the grade designation of “I”. The “I” is used when the teacher lacks enough evidence to determine proficiency or when the teacher has determined that the student needs additional time to meet proficiency (e.g. extended absence or incomplete work).
- The “I” designates “In progress toward grade level proficiency in skills and concepts”
- The “I” marking may be kept for up to **nine weeks (45 school days)** after the end of the grading period. Principal or principal’s designee approval is **required** for extenuating circumstances beyond this timeframe.
- A student who transfers out of the school **must** have the “I” replaced by a letter grade at the time of withdrawal.
- All “I” grades **must** be reconciled prior to the end of the school year. Grade of “I” not reconciled are automatically calculated as an “F” at the end of the school year. For more information about when to use the “I” **see Addendum B.**



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### Section 9. District Grade Scale and Quality Point Value:

#### A. Kindergarten Grade Progress Indicators for all content and Special Area

Grade	Grade Range	Description
<b>E= Excellent Progress</b>	<b>90-100</b>	Consistently demonstrates in-depth understanding of concepts, processes, and skills.
<b>S= Satisfactory Progress</b>	<b>70-89</b>	Demonstrates an understanding of major concepts, processes, and skills.
<b>N= Needs Improvement</b>	<b>60-69</b>	Developing a beginning understanding of major concepts, processes, and skills.
<b>U= Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>0-59</b>	Demonstrates little to no understanding of major concepts, processes, and skills.
<b>NG= No grade assigned</b>	<b>NG</b>	No grade assigned. Enrolled less than 15 days; curriculum suspended to provide state mandated intensive reading (section C in SPP)

#### B. 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Progress Indicators for all content and Special Area

Grade	Grade Range	Description
<b>E= Excellent Progress</b>	<b>90-100</b>	Consistently demonstrates in-depth understanding of concepts, processes, and skills.
<b>S= Satisfactory Progress</b>	<b>70-89</b>	Demonstrates an understanding of major concepts, processes, and skills.
<b>N= Needs Improvement</b>	<b>60-69</b>	Developing a beginning understanding of major concepts, processes, and skills.
<b>U= Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>0-59</b>	Demonstrates little to no understanding of major concepts, processes, and skills.
<b>I = In Progress</b>	<b>N/A</b>	In progress toward grade level proficiency in skills and concepts.
<b>NG= No grade assigned</b>	<b>NG</b>	No grade assigned. Enrolled less than 15 days; curriculum suspended to provide state mandated intensive reading (section C in SPP)

#### C. Third through Fifth Grade Rubric

Grade	Grade Range	Description
<b>A</b>	90-100	Outstanding Progress (Mastery) Consistently demonstrates in-depth understanding of concepts, processes, and skills
<b>B</b>	80-89	Above Average Progress Often demonstrates an understanding of major concepts, processes, and skills
<b>C</b>	70-79	Average Progress (Proficiency) Demonstrates a developing understanding of major concepts, processes, and skills
<b>D</b>	60-69	Lowest Acceptable Progress Demonstrates a beginning understanding of major concepts, processes, and skills
<b>F</b>	0-59	Non-completion of important components of tasks Demonstrates little or no understanding of major concepts, processes, and skills
<b>I</b>		In progress toward grade level proficiency in skills and concepts

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Honor Roll criteria for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade are found in the Student Progression Plan (SPP).

**D. Areas of Personal Development** in Kindergarten through grade 5, as well as **Effort and Conduct** in grades 1 through 5 will be based on the following numerical designations:

Satisfactory	1
Needs Improvement	2
Unsatisfactory	3

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### Addendum A

Comparison of Assessment Categories	
Formative	Summative
Occur during the learning process/ instructional unit	Occur after the learning process/ instructional unit
Provide feedback during the learning process to improve learning	Provide the information teachers need to assign a grade
Use quick questions to check for basic understanding	Do not have to cover an extended period; information could be chunked
Allow students to process smaller chunks of information and help students clarify their thinking before they become confused and frustrated	Allow students to prove what they have learned
Help teachers determine when to differentiate instruction to diverse needs	Helps teachers analyze the effectiveness of their differentiation and decide if formative assessments provided needed information
Enable teachers to gauge students' understanding throughout the lesson	Enable teachers to make a judgment about students' learning

Sample Formative Assessments	Sample Summative Assessments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal teacher questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal oral interview</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conversation with student</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conference with student</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal observation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal observation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rough drafts of written work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final copy of written work</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning log (in progress)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final learning log entries*</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflective journal (multiple drafts)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final journal entries*</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Response Strategies: Thumbs-up, whiteboards, fist-to-five, etc.</li> </ul>	
*would include elements of reflection, synthesis, and/or self-assessment	

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Assessment Types			
	Diagnostic	Formative	Summative
<b>Purpose</b>	To assess knowledge prior to instruction; to determine instructional needs in targeted areas	To monitor and guide a process/product while it is still in progress; to provide feedback to improve learning	To judge the success of instruction
<b>Time of Assessment</b>	Prior to initial instruction, after instruction to determine gaps in learning	During the learning process	At the end of the instructional unit or at the end of instruction on a standard
<b>Types of Assessment Techniques</b>	Informal observations, pre-tests, district accountability	Quick checks for basic understanding, informal observations, quizzes, teacher questions	Formal observation, tests, projects, written assessments, exhibitions

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### Addendum B

*The following examples demonstrate that the “I” does not automatically designate below grade level achievement. The chart below illustrates the increasing level of concern for the student’s progress and a corresponding increase in the intensity of intervention/monitoring required to ensure proficiency is achieved.*

Reason for Marking “I” on Interim/Report Card	Intervention Plan
Teacher lacks enough evidence to determine proficiency (extended absence, incomplete work).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher and student agree to how and when the work will be completed.</li> </ul>
Student has not shown proficiency in a specific topic or benchmark during the marking period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher provides intervention in the specific topic or benchmark and additional opportunities for students to demonstrate proficiency.</li> </ul>
Student is not proficient in multiple areas and requires supplemental intervention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher identifies areas of deficiency (<b>P</b>roblem Identification)</li> <li>Determine why the problem is occurring (<b>A</b>nalysis of Problem)</li> <li>Implement a plan for intervention (<b>I</b>ntervention design)</li> <li>Frequently monitor students’ progress Response to Intervention (<b>RtI</b>)</li> <li>Set goals and timeline for improvement</li> <li>Provide additional opportunities and supports for students to demonstrate proficiency</li> </ul>
Student has serious gaps on foundational skills. Student needs intensive instruction to accelerate learning in order to reach grade level skills and concepts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher with Problem-Solving Team identifies areas of deficiency (<b>P</b>roblem Identification)</li> <li>Determine why the problem is occurring (<b>A</b>nalysis of Problem)</li> <li>Implement a plan for intervention (<b>I</b>ntervention design)</li> <li>Frequently monitor students’ progress Response to Intervention (<b>RtI</b>)</li> <li>Set goals and timeline for improvement</li> <li>Provide additional opportunities and supports as needed to ensure progress</li> </ul>
<b>No Grade Assigned (NG)</b> Student transferred from out of district within the last 15 days or a portion of the curriculum has been suspended.	
<b>English Language Learners (ELLs)</b> are graded based on the WIDA Can Do Descriptors. They should not be marked with an “I” if they are making adequate progress toward grade level standards based on their appropriate English Language Proficiency Standards.	