



# Family Guide to Standards-Based Grading

2025-2026

McCann Technical School

In 2016 a group of faculty and administrators at McCann began to evaluate grading policies and practices throughout the school to look for best practices and areas for improvement. It was then determined, and approved by the school committee, that in order for assessment of learning to be effective, and equitable, we would move from a grading system based on the traditional 0-100, A, B,C,D, and F scale, to a standards-based grading system. In this system, students are assessed according to how well they meet a set of learning standards that have been written for each course. These standards were developed and written based on the Massachusetts State Frameworks. Every teacher in every course at McCann will follow these grading practices:

1. Use a consistent school-wide 4-tier achievement scale
2. Academic achievement is reported separately from behaviors
3. Achievement is organized and reported by standards
4. Scores are based on a body of evidence
5. Students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate proficiency

### Grading Practice 1: A consistent grade scale is used

Big Ideas:

- A scale with 4 levels is used rather than a traditional scale with 100 points
- Assessment scale has clear descriptors and language for the reporting standard
- Proficient is the grade-level expectation as described in the reporting standard

Through conversations, the grading committee determined that traditional scales with 100 points were focused on work completion, not on mastery of content. The purpose of the 4-level scale is to give clear feedback of student learning on a standard. Additionally, many things were embedded (hidden) in the 100 point scale that were not indicators of student learning. For example, tardiness, absenteeism, attitude, effort, and behavior are all factors that have been included in the score in traditional grading systems. These are not factors of what a student knows but rather who a student “is.” Accurate assessment of student learning should focus solely on what a student knows.

Scores will be based on the following scale:

Level	Description
4- Proficient	Demonstrates mastery of the skills and knowledge required in the standard.
3- Approaching Proficiency	Demonstrates a significant understanding of the skills and knowledge required in the standard that is nearing mastery.
2- Developing	Demonstrates basic understanding of skills and knowledge in the standard.
1- Limited	Demonstrates little to no understanding of skills and knowledge in the standard.
0-No Evidence	Demonstrates no evidence of the standard to be evaluated.
Not Covered	Not covered during this reporting period.

In this assessment scale, “Proficient” is considered the score that teachers and students are aiming for. This is the target goal for all students and a rating that indicates they have fully met the expectations for this standard. An “Approaching Proficiency” rating means that a student is doing well with that content and is getting close to mastery. “Developing” indicates that a student is still working to understand the content or skills being taught and can be expected when new content is introduced. “Limited” indicates that a student is significantly struggling with the standard which could be for a variety of reasons.

## Grading Practice 2: Academic achievement is reported separately from behaviors

### Big Ideas:

- When effort or behavior have an effect on your grade, it is hard to tell what a student actually knows and can do with their learning
- Grades should reflect how deeply students have learned course content
- How students interact with other people, their work habits, and integrity are still an important part of learning. In fact, it is so important that it needs to be reported separately.

Both learning and behavior are equally important. So much so that they each get a separate report in the standards-based grading environment. This ensures that the academic grade reflects only progress toward meeting the learning standards and not behaviors or work completion. The standard below illustrates the criteria for which student behaviors will be assessed to arrive at a “Citizenship Score.”

	Limited (1)	Developing (2)	Approaching Proficiency (3)	Proficient (4)
<b>I can demonstrate the elements contained in the definition of a McCann Good Citizen</b>	Student demonstrates few, if any, of the elements of a McCann Good Citizen.	Student demonstrates some of the elements of a McCann Good Citizen.	Student demonstrates most of the elements of a McCann Good Citizen.	Student demonstrates the elements of a McCann Good Citizen.

The elements of a McCann Good Citizen, which will also be covered, explained, and taught in Advisory courses are as follows:

1. **Respectful** (treats members of the school community, and the school itself, respectfully)
2. **Hard-working** (tries to do their best in whatever situation they are in)
3. **Punctual** (on time to school and class, completes work according to timelines)
4. **Accountable** (follows school rules, takes responsibility for their behavior/mistakes)
5. **Good communicator** (speaks politely to others, recognizes audience, avoids profanity)
6. **Honesty** (acts with integrity both as a person as well as with their work completion)

In addition to the Honor Roll, students will also be designated as “Good Citizens” and recognized in similar fashion. Students attaining a Citizenship Average of 3.5 or Higher will earn designation on the “Distinguished Citizens” list.

If a student receives a rating of “Limited” in their shop area, or in two or more academic areas, they will be ineligible to participate in extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities are defined as any activities related to McCann Tech that are not part of the required school curriculum. These include, but are not limited to; sports, clubs, SkillsUSA, BPA, Cooperative Work placements, dances, and field trips of a non-educational nature (i.e. senior trip).

The Principal is in charge of extracurricular activities and athletics. In the case of severe violations of the code of conduct, or repeated poor citizenship outside the class or shop area or at a school function, (i.e. parking lot, hallways, bathrooms, cafeteria), the administration may determine a student to be ineligible to participate in extra-curricular activities due to demonstrating limited citizenship in the school building.

### Grading Practice 3: Achievement is organized and reported by standards

#### Big Ideas:

- Teachers record learning progress on each standard by having students focus on specific learning targets and provide evidence of their learning.
- Ratings on a standard are based on your level of achievement in real-time. Improvement in performance is not unduly influenced by previous performance.
- Work that is done as practice is graded for feedback but the rating is not recorded in the gradebook.

Until recently, teachers collected every assignment and counted them towards a grade. Assignments were usually grouped into categories based on the type of task that they were and each category held a certain weight which allowed an average to be calculated at the end of the quarter.

Now, instead of creating categories based on the type of task performed, the grading categories are based on the content and skills that students should be proficient in.

#### Task-based Categories (Old method)

Category	Weight
Tests	30%
Classwork	20%
Participation	10%
Homework	15%
Projects	25%

**Focusing assessment and grading on mastery puts student learning, not compliance, at the center of our practice.**

#### Learning Standards (New method)

Metal Fabrication - Grade 9	
MF-9.1	Demonstrate proper shop safety techniques and procedures.
MF-9.2	Identify and demonstrate proper use of measurement devices for specific applications
MF-9.3	Recognize, identify and interpret basic lines, symbols and measurements on a blueprint.
MF-9.4	Demonstrate proper layout techniques
MF-9.5	Identify basic hand and power tools and demonstrate their safe use
MF-9.6	Identify various mechanical cutting tools and demonstrate their safe use
MF-9.8	Set up and demonstrate the safe and proper use of a SMAW machine
MF-9.9	Set up and demonstrate the safe and proper use of a GMAW machine

In standards-based grading scores of different categories are not averaged. They are reported as a rating within each standard which will average together into an overall rating in that course at the end of the year, which the instructor will give based on a year's worth of evidence. This helps foster a growth-mindset where students are encouraged to keep trying to reach proficiency without previous attempts weighing their "average" down. Students learn at different rates and should not be penalized for the speed in which they learn something but rather be encouraged and acknowledged in their pursuit of proficiency.

### Grading Practice 4: Scores are based on a body of evidence

#### Big Ideas:

- A 'body of evidence' is a collection of pieces of evidence that demonstrate understanding of the learning targets.
- Our purpose in collecting a body of evidence is to allow teachers to determine an accurate and transparent score for a standard based on a representation of student learning.
- Teachers use evidence to track your learning. Students can track their learning as well.

**Scoring/Rating:**

A 'learning target' is a statement that explains what you should know and comes from a standard. There may be multiple learning targets in order to meet one standard.

Because of the rating scale provided with each learning target, the teacher looks at the evidence students provide against the descriptors in the scale to determine a score. Remember that scores show a progression of learning and change with student growth over time.

**Sample rating scale for a task in Metal Fabrication:**

Reporting Standard: MF-9.2 Identify and demonstrate proper use of measurement devices for specific applications			
Limited	Developing	Approaching Proficiency	Proficient
I can identify a tape measure	I can identify and properly use a tape measure with assistance	I can identify and properly use a tape measure independently with accuracy (+/- 1/16")	I can identify and properly use a tape measure consistently and independently with accuracy (+/- 1/32")

AP-PCAL-11-1: Solve equations and inequalities with and without technology			
Limited	Developing	Approaching Proficiency	Proficient
I can solve equations and inequalities, with and without technology, with guided support.	I can solve equations and inequalities, with and without technology, with frequent support.	I can solve equations and inequalities, with and without technology, with minimal support.	I can consistently and independently solve equations and inequalities, with and without technology.

**No Evidence:**

If over the course of a marking period the instructor feels a student has not demonstrated enough evidence to warrant a rating the teacher will assign a quarter grade No Evidence. Students will need to work with their teacher to provide the needed evidence in order to gain a rating in that standard for the next quarter.

**Grading Practice 5: Students will have multiple opportunities to demonstrate proficiency**

**Big Ideas:**

- The whole point of education is to learn. Different learners deserve different ways to demonstrate learning and sometimes in slightly different time frames

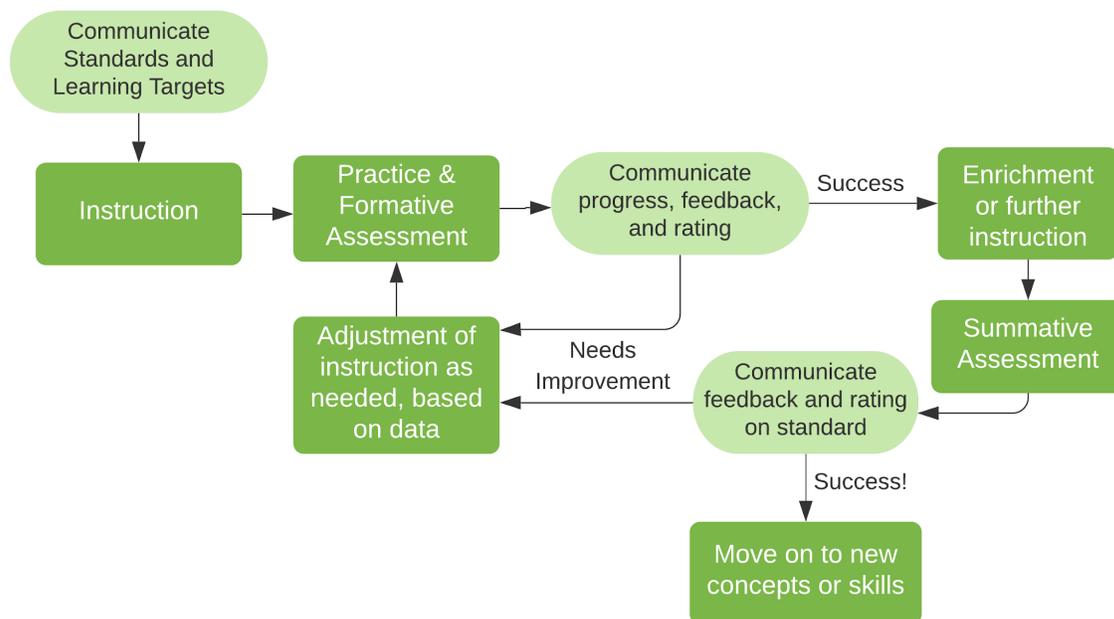
- Teachers often incorporate previous learning in new content to provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning, ideas, and skills as outlined in the learning targets

In reviewing teaching practices, we are trying to change our mindset **from this:**



**To this:**

Clear learning targets and scales provide insight into student progress. Teachers plan their lessons with student learning goals in mind. They know it's best to teach and provide practice that is not scored in order to provide meaningful feedback during the learning process. Here is an example of how the standards-based teaching and learning workflow may look in the classroom:



### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

**Is there a letter grade to standards-based grade conversion or equivalency to help me understand my student's progress?**

No, there is no equivalency. This assessment and reporting system requires a new way of thinking for parents as well. Yes, it will be a shift in understanding student progress for parents who are used to seeing a grade and believing that they knew what it meant. And parents feel good when they see an "A" on a test or report card. We understand. Unfortunately, the differences between what people (students, parents, AND teachers) believed these numbers meant were very wide-ranging. Condensing student performance to a letter that represents a range of numbers mixes behavior, effort, conduct, extra-credit, and student knowledge into one unclear summation. The new standards-based report cards will provide greater understanding for parents because they will be able to see exactly which specific skills and knowledge their child has acquired. And remember, these report cards will give parents and students specific information about how a student is doing

and pinpoint where the student needs to improve. Additionally, these report cards will give parents clarity on their student's behavior and effort as well under their citizenship ratings.

**What are the advantages of standards-based grading?**

Improved communication and additional feedback for parents, students and teachers - parents and students will see areas of academic strength and weakness in the grade book rather than seeing a test score or homework score and wondering what the next steps might be. Teachers will know which standards they need to re-teach. Students will know which standards they need additional learning opportunities and/or practice with.

**Are certain standards weighted more than others in the gradebook?**

No, all standards have equal weighting. However, a student's citizenship rating stands alone and is not figured into the overall rating in an academic or vocational course.

**How will feedback be given beyond a score in the gradebook?**

Because teachers and students operate from common rating scales for each learning target that define what each level means, the feedback can be targeted. Example: "You received a score of "Developing" because you have sufficiently stated your claim. In order to get a "Proficient", you will need to support your claim with evidence from the text."

**Shouldn't attendance, effort and completion of homework be rewarded?**

Yes, those things are important. However, they should not affect a student's rating on a specific learning target. These are behaviors. Students should be held accountable for these behaviors and their progress is reported in their Citizenship score.

**Why do we not include practice or formatives in the body of evidence?**

Students must be given the opportunity to learn without the fear of failure or negative repercussions on their first attempt. As such, work that is given to students as practice or formative assessment is intended to be for their own learning process and not as a test of their ability... yet. A formative assessment is a very important tool for the teacher to know where a student stands in the learning process, and an opportunity to give important feedback to the student that can guide them to proficiency in the task at hand. At this point in their education, students cannot be expected to achieve proficiency in a new skill or concept on their first attempt. We must practice before we can perform.

**What about students with disabilities?**

Students with disabilities will continue to receive accommodations, as outlined in their IEPs (individual education plans) or 504 Plans, that will help students to demonstrate meeting the Proficient level of a rating scale. Accommodations are changes or adaptations in how an educator teaches to meet individual learning needs, and do not change the learning standard. Some examples of accommodations are possibly extending testing time or utilizing an assistive technology device due to a disability related need. Students with disabilities that have content modifications outlined in their IEPs will have reporting standards and rating scales modified to meet their disability-related needs by their educational team. A single teacher cannot individually decide to change a standard for a student.

**Will there be an honor roll?**

Yes. Students will be placed on the honor roll based on the following criteria:

- Students who have an overall GPA of 3.75 to 4.0 will receive "High Honors" designation.
- Students who have an overall GPA of 3.5 to 3.74 will receive "Honors" designation.
- Students who have a citizenship GPA of 3.5 or higher will receive "Distinguished Citizen" designation.

### How will this impact my child's college application?

Colleges are prepared to receive transcripts from schools using Standards Based Grading techniques and, in fact, already do. College admissions officers are trained to interpret and score transcripts from multiple different types of schools, states, and countries they receive transcripts from, some of which use Standards-Based Grading. Further, the New England Secondary Schools Consortium has a website that includes an attestation from 85 New England colleges stating that standards-based transcripts will not be a disadvantage to their applicants. In addition to these attestations there is a wealth of information on their website, [www.newenglandssc.org](http://www.newenglandssc.org) that highlights the benefits of standards-based grading (or proficiency based grading as it can be referred to as well) and confirms that colleges and universities “strongly support public schools that are working to improve student preparation.”

### PLEASE SEE THE GUIDE BELOW FOR AN QUICK REFERENCE CHART FURTHER EXPLAINING THE PROFICIENCY LEVELS AND THEIR MEANING.

#### Standards-Based Grading Guide

Performance Level	Definition	Course Credit?	Parent Explanation
4-Proficient	Demonstrates mastery of the skills and knowledge required in the standard.	Yes	Your child is mastering the content in this standard/course. They are excelling!
3-Approaching Proficiency	Demonstrates skills and knowledge required in the standard at a level that is nearing mastery.	Yes	Your child is showing a solid understanding of the material in this course and is working well towards mastering the material.
2-Developing	Demonstrates basic understanding of the skills and knowledge in this standard	Yes	Your child does not have this completely figured out yet. They are still a 'work in progress' in this area. Some extra time/effort in this area would help. They will receive credit, but should be focused working up to higher ratings..
1-Limited	Demonstrates little to no understanding of the skills and knowledge in the standard	No	Your child is really struggling with this standard. More time or effort needs to be dedicated to this area. Extra help should be pursued.
0-No Evidence	Demonstrates no evidence of the standard to be evaluated	No	Your child is not providing any work in this area for their teacher to evaluate. Assignments are missing and your child needs to engage in this class. Right now they are not putting the required effort into learning the material and providing evidence of their learning by submitting work.