

Dear Parent/Guardian,

With the first quarter coming to a close and Parent/Teacher conferences next week, I'd like to give a quick reminder of our philosophy and grading policy. These policies, which align with those stated in our Student Handbook (see p. 20), are in place to provide parents and students with as much information as possible concerning a student's abilities and progress. We understand it may look a little different than the past, but we're confident that we are using data to drive our instruction at the individual level now more than ever. Below you will find a "cheat sheet" that explains how we've arrived at each grade you will see in PowerSchool and on report cards. Please look over the descriptions; we plan to use part of your parent/teacher conference time to answer any questions you may have. You'll also be receiving additional handouts and charts during your conferences that will provide additional details about your student's progress.

Differentiated Reading: This course will reflect how students are performing on unit tests written at their ability level in our reading curriculum. Intensive Level readers are performing up to 1½ years below grade level or more. Strategic Level readers are performing up to a 1/2 grade level below grade level. A child reading at the Benchmark Level is performing on grade level. Advanced Level readers are currently performing above grade level expectations. Please contact your child's teacher for information regarding your student's level. These tests are taken approximately every 4 weeks, so there will be few scores entered.

Math: After entering scores on the 4-point rubric into our curriculum's Assessment Differentiation System, we are able to calculate student progress on each of the five strands of our math standards. The percentages earned for each strand assessed in that unit will be entered into PowerSchool. These percentages, calculated after each unit (approximately three weeks in length), combine to give an overall math score.

Language Arts: Scores in this course are curriculum assessments taken at the appropriate grade level. These assessments include both weekly skill and comprehension tests, as well as quarterly benchmark tests that provide a more comprehensive view of skills. Again, these assessments are written on grade level; be sure to see the Differentiated Reading score for information about progress at your student's ability level.

Spelling: Students are given weekly spelling tests. These scores accumulate for the quarter and are reflected in this grade.

Music/PE/Art: Students earn grades for their positive participation in each of these classes. Contact the specific specials teacher if you have any questions.

Scores listed as "N": With our focus shifting away from grades to individual student growth, we have decided to change the letters assigned to percentages lower than 70% to "N," which stands for "Needs Improvement." We understand that students are working very hard to improve, and we find a traditional scale to be more punitive than focused on growth. Scores above 70% will continue to use traditional letters.

We are privileged to be involved in the education of your student and look forward to continuing to work with you throughout this school year and beyond. As always, your student's classroom teacher is the best source of specific information regarding your student, and I encourage you to contact them with any questions you may have. Parent/Teacher conference next week would be the perfect opportunity.

I look forward to seeing you next week during conferences. Thank you for all you do!

Jennifer Hanni and the SAC Faculty