



# MONTGOMERY CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

## Standards-Based Learning Handbook

*"Train up a child in the way he should go:  
and when he is old, he will not depart from it."*

*Proverbs 22:6*

At Montgomery Christian Academy, we understand the incredible privilege and responsibility of the discipleship of children. Our teachers and staff members believe that serving and ministering to students is their calling. Our goal is for each child to reach their highest potential spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally.

Our academic standards will meet or exceed the local and state laws that govern education.

After extensive research, MCA has chosen to use a standards-based learning approach to instruction and grading in an effort to strive for excellence in academics. Standards-based learning is a progressive approach which we believe will allow us to better identify our students' individual learning needs, drive instruction to meet those needs, and provide a more accurate picture of your child's mastery of grade level skills.

<http://mctownsley.net/standards-based-grading-research/>

While this method is becoming more widely used in education, we acknowledge that it is a shift from traditional grading. We are committed to continually refine our methods as we gather new information to make standards-based learning a truly useful tool for students, parents, and teachers.

***...Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31***

### **What is standards-based learning?**

Standards-based learning focuses a student's learning on the essential standards (learning goals) for a class, or how well the student understands and can apply the key material in class. At the beginning of each unit, the teacher will break down the outcomes for the unit into smaller components and criteria using a proficiency scale. During the unit, learning is monitored frequently to gauge understanding and application of the material. Teachers will use a variety of assessments, such as traditional pencil-and-paper tests, projects, discussions, or reports, as well as other non-traditional methods such as observation, individual work, or conversations with a student. The class grade will be based on all of the evidence the teacher collects demonstrating a student's mastery of the essential outcomes.

The goal of this approach is to provide the teacher, student, and parent as accurate a picture as possible of the student's learning and to encourage a conversation about how the student can master the material for the class. In particular, because learning is a process that takes place over time, the teacher will provide feedback to the student about what to focus on next, and the student will be allowed to show improved learning over time by relearning and reassessing. If the new evidence shows a higher level of mastery, the new score replaces the old one.

### **How is standards-referenced learning different from traditional grading?**

In the traditional 100-point grading system, a student's grades are typically based on all of the work assigned in class, including classwork, homework, projects, quizzes, and tests. These scores are often arranged in the grade book based on the type of assignment rather than on the essential outcomes for the class. The grade may also include points for non-academic factors, such as participation, effort, or attitude.

Standards-based learning looks at how well a student has demonstrated proficiency on the standards (learning goals), so the grade book does not separate out tests, homework, or projects. Instead, all of the work a student does is used to assess what a student knows and can do. Students' scores are tracked by the course's standards to give the teacher, student, and parent a very detailed picture of each student's learning. Non-academic factors like behavior, attitude, and attendance are not included in the outcome grade, but are recorded and reported separately.

## Why is MCA using standards-based learning?

Our academic goal at MCA is to improve student learning by reporting grades that are accurate, consistent, meaningful, and supportive of learning. Our decision to use standards-based learning is an effort to reach that goal. Here is how standards-based learning addresses each of those four criteria:

**Accurate:** By basing a student's grade solely on academic factors, the teacher creates a clear picture of what the student has learned without the influence of other factors. These other factors, such as effort and attitude, are still essential, but are not part of the student's academic grade and are communicated separately.

**Consistent:** For each unit, the teacher will provide a proficiency scale that describes what the student must know or do to demonstrate proficiency. The proficiency scale establishes clear expectations for mastery at the beginning of a unit and is referenced consistently throughout the unit and semester.

**Meaningful:** A meaningful grade is one that clearly communicates what learning has taken place. In a standards-based classroom, scores are recorded by the essential standards rather than by type, such as tests or homework, making it easier to identify areas of strength and areas of growth.

**Supportive of Learning:** This approach supports learning by focusing on the material that has or has not been learned rather than on accumulating points to reach a certain total. The reassessment policy also supports student learning by allowing new levels of learning to replace old when a student shows improvement on an outcome.

## What does the number scale (4, 3.5, 3, 2.5, 2, 1.5, 1, .5 and 0) on the rubric mean?

The scores on the scale represent a learning continuum and are NOT equated to grade point average. Each of the levels builds on the others and explains the learning students have to demonstrate in order to earn a score (See the samples on pages 11 and 12.) Students must demonstrate proficiency as they move up the scale. For example a student may not earn a 3 until they demonstrate proficiency of the level 2 concepts or skills. The scale designations are as follows:

**4** – The student demonstrates an in-depth understanding of the material by completing advanced applications of the material.

- **3.5** – In addition to a 3.0 score, the student demonstrates in-depth inferences and applications with partial success.

**3** – The student demonstrates proficiency on the complex, targeted knowledge and skills for the class.

- **2.5** – In addition to a 2.0 score, the student demonstrates partial knowledge of 3.0 elements.

**2** – The student understands the foundational material, but is still working to master application of the concepts and skills

- **1.5** – The student demonstrates understanding of all 1.0 elements with help and independent understanding of some 2.0 elements.

**1** – The student is able to demonstrate an understanding of all of the foundational material with support

- **0.5** – The student demonstrates understanding of some 1.0 elements.

**0** – Even with assistance from the teacher, the student shows no understanding of the material.

# STANDARDS-BASED LEARNING PROGRESSION



## Why is the grade scale for standards-based grading different?

Standards-based grading focuses on measuring students' mastery of a specific set of outcomes. The grade scale reflects the level of proficiency achieved for each standard. Standard scores on the report card are reported using the number scale only for K4 and K5 students. (4, 3.5, 3, 2.5, 2, 1.5, 1 or 0)

**Beginning in 1st Grade**, the number scale grade for each standard is averaged and then translated at the end of each trimester into a traditional letter grade for each subject area. In order to translate the number score into a traditional letter grade, we adjust the cutoffs to reflect the 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 scale. The resulting scale is shown below.

Number scale grade	=	Standards-based grade range	=	Letter grade
4		3.00 - 4.00		A
3		2.50 - 2.99		B
2		2.00 - 2.49		C
1		1.00 - 1.99		D
0		Below 1.00		F

In these conversions, a low A is the cut score for proficient. The rationale for this is that student performance at this level is at the expected or anticipated level - hence, the assignment of an A. (Marzano, 2010)

Robert J. Marzano's research (2010) explains:

The A begins at 3.0 because a score of 3.0 indicates that a student has demonstrated understanding of all content in a target learning goal with no major errors or omissions. This makes some intuitive sense - if a student's average score indicates that he or she knows everything that was taught for the target learning goals, he or she should receive an A. (p. 106)

## **If we change school districts, how will my student's grades be transferred if the new district does not use standards-based learning?**

When a student transfers to a new district, the transfer grade is determined by the student's current letter grade. For example, if the student currently has an average of 3 on the standards-based proficiency scale, the current letter grade is a A, so the transfer grade is sent as a A.

## **How will my student be assessed?**

A student's learning is assessed using a variety of formative and summative assessments. These tools include formal assessments such as traditional paper-and-pencil tests, projects, written papers, lab reports, or verbal assessments, but they may also include informal assessments such as classroom discussions or teacher observations. Essentially, everything that a student does in a standards-based class provides the teacher with evidence of the student's learning.

## **What can my student do to raise their grade in a standards-based class?**

The goal in a standards-based class is to ensure that students master the essential standards for the class. The student should meet with the teacher to determine which outcomes need improvement and fill out a reassessment agreement to create a plan to learn the material and set a date to be reassessed. If the student demonstrates a higher level of mastery on the outcome assessment, then the newer score will replace the older score. Again, the focus is to improve the student's mastery of the content and skills required in each unit, so extra credit points, or score penalties for retesting, are not used in standards-referenced grading.

## **What does my student need to do in order to be reassessed?**

*(1st Grade and above)*

After completing an assessment in a standards-based class, the student can ask for a reassessment using the process described below. The reassessment agreement is included at the end of this document.

1. A reassessment agreement will be completed in a student teacher conference starting with the "Outcomes to Reassess" section to identify which outcomes need to be reassessed and at what levels.
2. The student and teacher complete the "Preparation Information" by picking a few activities that would help the student learn the concepts and/or skills. The teacher may require specific activities to prepare for the reassessment, such as completing missing assignments. Any activity selected by the student or teacher must have evidence that it has been completed.
3. Together, the student and teacher will decide when, where, and how the student will be reassessed in the "Reassessment Information" section.
4. Once all of the relearning activities have been completed, the student will show the necessary evidence to the teacher, and both the teacher and student will sign the "Reassessment Approval" section of the agreement.
5. The student is now ready to be reassessed as described in the "Reassessment Information" section.

The reassessment agreement supports a student's learning by:

- Ensuring that learning takes place before reassessment.
- Identifying the specific steps the student must complete to be reassessed.
- Clarifying the reassessment process for both the student and the teacher.
- Identifying exactly how the student will be reassessed.

If you have any additional questions about the reassessment process, please contact your student's teacher.

## **Why should my student do the homework assigned if it isn't included in the grade?**

MCAs daily homework is what we do in route to mastery, but not a statement of final mastery itself. Homework is given in order for students to practice, reinforce, and extend what they already know. Parents should expect homework to reflect content studied in class. Teachers will expect homework to be completed Monday-Thursday. These assignments are ongoing practice activities like daily reading, fact fluency, word study, or project based learning assignments. Teachers will give students feedback using letters and codes which you will see below (INC, EXE, MET, DNM, or NC). Homework will not be given if it does not directly advance students' learning and success. Extra assignments may be assigned when your child needs reassessment or extra practice to reach proficiency.

## **What does EXE, MET, DNM, and NC mean?**

Practice and participation in assigned learning tasks can support and enhance your child's learning, therefore your student will be given a variety of learning tasks to help them master foundational concepts and apply new skills. Since learning is a process that takes place over time and at different speeds for different students, learning tasks in a standards-based grading system will be scored using the acronyms below. Scores on learning tasks may provide additional evidence that will allow the teacher to exercise professional judgment in the determination of a final course grade. The main purpose of scoring learning tasks, however, is to provide detailed feedback to students and parents about student progress. You will see the following score codes in the grade book:

**EXE** – student performance on the learning task exceeds expectations

**MET** – student performance on the learning task met expectations

**DNM** – student performance on the learning task did not meet expectations

**NC** – student has not completed learning task

## **What does "LND" mean?**

LND stands for "level not determined." This score is used when there is not enough information to give a student a score for an outcome based on the current assessment evidence. This score may be used when a student struggles with an assessment and the teacher needs more information to determine the level of proficiency. LND's are temporary scores used while the teacher gathers more evidence to give a score and will not be in the grade book for more than two weeks. An LND does not affect the student's overall grade.

## **What does "INC" mean?**

INC stands for "Incomplete." This score is used when the student has not completed the necessary assessments to be given a grade for a standard due to absences or other factors.

## **Are non-academic factors, such as effort, attitude, participation, and behavior part of the class grade?**

These factors have always been and will continue to be an important part of every student's success. However, in standards-based grading, these factors will be communicated separately from the student's academic grade.

# MCA Reassessment Agreement

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

## Outcomes to Reassess (to be completed with or by the student)

I would like to be reassessed on the following outcomes at the indicated levels. (Circle all that apply.)

\_\_\_\_\_ 2.0 3.0 4.0

\_\_\_\_\_ 2.0 3.0 4.0

\_\_\_\_\_ 2.0 3.0 4.0

## Preparation Information (to be completed by the student with teacher input)

Before my reassessment, I will complete the following activities to prepare:

Date	Activity *	Evidence of Completion
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

\*Use the list of ideas on back of this page if necessary. Your teacher may require specific activities.

## Reassessment Information (to be completed by the student and teacher together)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Reassessment Method (to be determined by teacher):

\_\_\_ Written response \_\_\_ Verbal assessment \_\_\_ Revised form \_\_\_ Same form

\_\_\_ Other (please describe: \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher Signature

## Reassessment Approval

I have completed all of the necessary activities and am now ready to be reassessed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Reassessment Guidelines**

- The student must complete all the activities and provide evidence of learning in order to be allowed to complete the reassessment.
- If a student is unable to take the reassessment due to missing evidence or failure to show up, the student will be allowed to reschedule the reassessment once.
- No reassessments will be allowed during the final week of a trimester.
- The reassessment score will be recorded in the grade book and used to help determine the student's grade for the outcome. Completing a reassessment does not guarantee that the student's grade will increase.

## **Reassessment Study Activities**

Select from the activities below to complete the "Preparation Information" section of the reassessment agreement. You can also check with your teacher to see if there are any particular activities that are recommended. If you need any additional explanation or information about any of these ideas, please see your teacher.

### **Sample Activities**

Complete missing assignments

Make flashcards

Create practice assessment

Tutoring with a teacher

Study your notes – 30 minute minimum

Complete internet activities provided by your teacher Design a review game

Make a poster explaining a topic or process

Create a web diagram

Write a summary for each of the individual topics in the rubric Complete review exercises in the textbook

### **Possible Evidence of Completion**

Completed assignments

Completed flashcards

Completed practice assessment with answer key Signed note documenting tutoring time Study log

Screenshots showing completion Completed game

Completed poster

Completed diagram

Completed summaries

Completed exercises

**Other activities provided by your teacher:**

## New Taxonomy (Marzano)

This taxonomy is offered to support teachers as they build high quality assessments aligned to depth of knowledge. Although there are other models we will use this for consistency within our grade levels.

Level of Difficulty	Mental Processes	Terms and Phrases
<p><b>Level 4 Advanced</b></p> <p>Knowledge Utilization Inferences Application</p>	<p>Decision Making Problem Solving Experimenting Investigating Use information to make a decision Use information to accomplish a goal and work through obstacles Figure out a way How could it be improved?</p>	<p>Decide Select from the following alternatives Which among the following would be the best? What is the best way?/Develop a strategy to Which of these is most suitable? Solve/Adapt / How would you overcome? Figure out a way to How will you reach your goal under these conditions? Test the idea that / What would happen if? How would you test that? How would you determine if?/ How can this be explained? Based on the experiment, what can be predicted? Investigate/Research/ Experiment Find out about/ Take a position on What are the differing features of? How did this happen? Why did this happen? What would have happened if?</p>
<p><b>Level 3 Proficient</b></p> <p>Analysis Critique Diagnose Evaluate</p>	<p>Matching Classifying Analyzing Errors Generalizing Specifying Identify categories Identify Similarities and Differences What would happen if? Identify issues or misunderstandings</p>	<p>Categorize/Sort Compare and contrast Differentiate/Discriminate/Distinguish Create an analogy/Create a metaphor Classify/Organize/Generalize Sort Identify a broader category Identify categories, different types, errors, problems, issues Identify misunderstandings Assess/Critique/Diagnose Edit/Revise/Evaluate What conclusions can be drawn What inferences can be made Create a generalization, a principle, a rule Trace the development of Form conclusions Make and defend / Predict/Judge What would have to happen Develop an argument for/ Under what Conditions</p>
<p><b>Level 2 Basic</b></p> <p><b>Comprehension</b></p>	<p>Integrating Symbolizing Construct Symbolic of Representations  Describe key parts</p>	<p>Describe how or why Describe the key parts of / Describe the effects Describe the relationship between Explain ways in which Paraphrase/Summarize Symbolize/ Depict/Represent/ Draw/Show/Illustrate / Use models/ Diagram/Chart</p>
<p><b>Level 1 Minimal</b></p> <p><b>Retrieval</b></p>	<p>Recognizing Recalling Executing Perform Procedures Identify-who, where, when</p>	<p>Recognize (from a list) Select from (a list) / Identify (from a list) Determine (if the following statements are true) Exemplify / Name/ List/Label/State/Describe Identify who, when, where, what Use, Draft / Demonstrate, Show/make/complete</p>

## Abbreviated Scale Involving Learning Goals at Different Levels of Difficulty

Score 4.0	More complex learning goal
Score 3.0	TARGET learning goal
Score 2.0	Simpler learning goal
Score 1.0	With help, partial success at score 2.0 content and score 3.0 content
Score 0.0	Even with help, no success

The scale above requires three learning goals. The target learning goal is the goal initially designed by the teacher for the whole class. It is placed in score 3.0 position on the scale. A more complex goal is placed in the score 4.0 position, and a simpler goal is placed in the score 2.0 position. Score 1.0 and score 0.0 don't require new goals; they involve students' successful performance (or lack of performance) with help.

### Marzano's New Taxonomy:

Level 4 - Knowledge Utilization

Level 3 - Analysis

Level 2 - Comprehension

Level 1 - Retrieval

*"Why would anyone want to change current grading practices? The answer is quite simple: Grades are so imprecise that they are almost meaningless."*

-Robert Marzano

### NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY OF MONTGOMERY CHRISTIAN ACADEMY: a Texas Nonprofit Corporation

Montgomery Christian Academy is committed to providing an environment for students that is free from discrimination based on race, color, nationality, ethnic origin, or disability. In addition, MCA does not discriminate in its administration of educational policies or any other school programs.

It is the policy of Montgomery Christian Academy to:

- Accept students of any race, color, nationality, ethnic origin, or disability to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded to its students.
- Make reasonable accommodations wherever necessary for all students with disabilities, provided that the individual can safely function in the classroom and provided that any accommodations made do not require significant difficulty or expense.
- Thoroughly investigate instances of alleged discrimination and take corrective action, if warranted.
- Be continually alert to identify and correct any practices by individuals that are at variance with the intent of the Equal Employment Opportunity Policy