



## Holmes MS Family Learning & Grading Guide

(last revision 3/15/17)

Note: It is important to recognize that the following document is a guide to our work, which is ever-evolving. Extensive research and expert consultation over the past year has gone into its development. This provides a strong starting point for measuring student learning more accurately, and providing meaningful feedback more effectively. We are always seeking feedback and input to continually shape and hone our practices so they most effectively meet the needs of students, teachers, and parents to promote and enhance student learning and achievement at Holmes Middle School. As such, we invite your involvement as student or parent to be part of our team. For more information go to Great Schools Partnership ([greatschoolspartnership.org](http://greatschoolspartnership.org)), select “Presentations” and then “Colorado Seminar Series”.

***What does it mean to be an educated person truly prepared for higher education or the workforce?*** As educators attempting to prepare students for a very dynamic and rapidly changing world, we recognize the necessity that students acquire much more than content knowledge. To thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, a much more dynamic set of skills and knowledge is required. Technology and scientific advancements continually change the landscape of the immediate future. In order for individuals to be confident, competent and ultimately successful, they must truly become life-long learners who are adaptive problem-solvers capable of working both independently or collaboratively.

### **Developing Academic Competency, Habits of Work, and essential Non-academic Skills**

It is our belief that Academic Grades should be an accurate representation of a student’s content knowledge and skills as consistently measured against clearly established Scoring Criteria for student performance identified in each course and/or grade level. Academic grades are not to be part of a reward, motivation or behavioral contract system. Non-academic behaviors such as work habits, collaboration, communication, self-direction, and creativity are skills that will be measured and reported separately, and will replace what was formerly known in D11 as *Citizenship*. These non-academic competencies are immensely important as they represent the skills and qualities that employers and colleges look for. By making this delineation between academic and non-academic competencies, we can more strategically support the academic and behavioral needs and skill development for each student as an individual. As a result of these beliefs and practices, academic grades will more purely and reliably represent what students know and are able to do.

Simply stated: Student learning and development will be targeted and assessed in three basic areas: **1. Academic Competencies** (content knowledge and skills), **2. Habits of Work** (HOW – task completion, meeting due dates, and participation), and **3. Essential Non Academic Skill Sets** (self-direction, collaboration, communication, and creativity). Each will be described in greater detail below.

### **Grading Language and Scale**

**Course Standards:** Holmes Middle School course standards are derived from the **Colorado Academic Standards** set by the Colorado Department of Education. A course standard is a description of concepts or skills that can be achieved during a particular course; they represent the essential things students must know or be able to do in that course. Report cards communicate a student’s achievement level of assessed course standards.

**Learning Targets:** Projects and daily lessons are built around *learning targets*, which are stepping-stones towards meeting course standards. Learning targets are discussed with students, so they have a clear picture of what they are learning through doing the work.

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**Traditional Grades:** This is the grading system that is historically most common in public education in the United States. Often generated by averaging the percentage correct on multiple pieces of work over a period of time. Moreover, traditional grading practices often blend academic marks with behavioral rewards such as extra credit, or with behavioral demerits such as deductions for work turned in late.

(A = 90=100%; B = 80-89%, C = 70-79%; D = 60-69%; F = 0-59%)

**Competency-based:** Students are assessed against specific Scoring Criteria on a 4-Pt. Scale that is built from specific grade-level performance expectations for that course. At Holmes Middle School, these detailed student knowledge and skill expectations will be developed and housed in the Learning Management System called **Schoology**.

0 = No Evidence. Does not meet the standard.

1 = Beginning. Does not meet the standard.

2 = Approaching the Standard

3 = Meets the Standard

4 = Exceeds the Standards

### Competency-based Scoring Descriptions

For each major assessment, teachers will develop *Scoring Criteria* or *rubrics* that make clear the criteria that a student will have to meet in order to receive a 1, 2, 3, or 4. The chart on the next page describes the grading scale in more detail:

**Possible Variations:** On some assessments, especially those that are less complex, only the grades 1, 2, or 3 may be possible. (Example: Tasks that require the recall of relatively simple factual knowledge such as a vocabulary quiz or a quiz on Science lab safety.) On more complex assessments that include rubrics with multiple criteria for a standard the full spectrum of 1 through 4 are possible. In fact, a grade between 3 and 4 is also possible. The specific indicators within the rubric define the qualities a student's work must have in order to earn a score between 3 and 4.

On an assessment of a course standard, this means in addition to meeting the criteria for a 3...

**3.25:** A student's work meets about 25% of the Exceeds criteria.

**3.5:** A student's work meets about 50% of the Exceeds criteria.

**3.75:** A student's work meets about 75% of the Exceeds criteria.

For overall grades, students may receive grades between 3 and 4, which means...

**3.25:** Consistently or lately, the student's work has met about 25% of the "Exceeds" criteria.

**3.5:** Consistently or lately, the student's work met about 50% of the "Exceeds" criteria.

**3.75:** Consistently or lately, the student's work has met about 75% of the "Exceeds" criteria.

Due to the fact that School District Eleven's academic grade reporting systems still require a letter grade to be given for each course, we must translate competency-based marks into letter grades at the end of each marking period. The correlation between the 4-pt. scale and letter grades will be as follows:

Average of Summative Competency-based Performances for the Marking Period	Corresponding Letter Grade
<b>3.6 – 4.0</b>	<b>A</b>
<b>3.1 – 3.5</b>	<b>B</b>
<b>2.6 – 3.0</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>2.0 – 2.5</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>1.9 or Less</b>	<b>F</b>

This translation into a single letter grade actually undermines ideal competency-based practices. Hopefully, this translation will not be necessary in the near future as we move further into competency-based. It is also important to note that the receipt of a letter grade of "D" indicates a performance that is highly questionable regarding the students actual "readiness" for the next level or course. Moreover, considering the continued use of the 4-pt. scale and its translation to letter grades, in the next couple of years, we may transition to passing grades of A, B, and C only.

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**Table Describing the 4-pt. Scale:**

Score	Description	For an overall course grade on a report card this means...	On a classroom assignment this means...
<b>0</b>	<b>No Evidence. Has not yet begun to demonstrate any aspect of the standard.</b>	A student's body of work has not yet begun to demonstrate any level of mastery of the standards assessed.  <i>This is <u>not</u> a passing grade.</i>	The student has not submitted the assignment, or the student' work does not demonstrate any understanding of even beginning to accomplish the standard.  <i>This is <u>not</u> a passing grade.</i>
<b>1</b>	<b>Just Beginning. Does Not Meet the Standard</b>	A student's body of work has not met the majority of the standards assessed.  <i>This is <u>not</u> a passing grade.</i>	A student's work does not demonstrate substantive progress towards meeting the standard or criteria of a given assessment by an established deadline. This may mean that a student has not met the majority of performance indicators or criteria for that assessment, or student has not made an attempt to meet criteria.  <i>This is <u>not</u> a passing grade.</i>
<b>2</b>	<b>Approaching the Standard</b>	A student's body of work has met a majority of the standards assessed, but has just partially met one or more of them.  <i>This is the lowest passing grade.</i>	A student's work demonstrates a substantive attempt to meet the standards of a given assessment by the established deadline, but needs more time to achieve competency and meet all the criteria for the assessment.  <i>This is the lowest passing grade.</i>
<b>3</b>	<b>Meets the Standard</b>	The student has met (earned a 3) on each and every one of the course standards assessed during the quarter. This does <i>not</i> mean that a student must be successful on every assessment, but his/her overall body of work demonstrates competency in each of the assessed standards.  <i>This is a soundly passing grade.</i>	A student's work fundamentally and competently meets the standard being assessed. <i>All</i> of the criteria for Meets the Standard (e.g., in the Scoring Criteria rubric) are demonstrated in the work.  <i>This is a soundly passing grade.</i>
<b>4</b>	<b>Exceeds the Standard</b>	A student's work has consistently and/or lately <u>exceeded</u> the Standard in each and every course standard assessed up to that point.  <i>This is the highest grade possible, demonstrating significant skill beyond the standard.</i>	The student's work goes substantially above and beyond the course standards in quality and rigor. Sometimes, a student will have to opt to complete a particular task(s) or prompt(s), not required of all, in order to be eligible for an Exceeds. <i>All</i> of the criteria for Exceeds the Standard (e.g. in the Scoring Criteria rubric) are demonstrated in the work  <i>This is the highest grade possible, demonstrating significant skill beyond the standard.</i>

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**Scoring Criteria:** A scoring matrix for each Course Standard that describes the specific student performance outcomes that must be demonstrated to earn a 1, 2, 3, or 4 for that specific academic skill or set of skills. An example of scoring criteria is provided below. The performance indicator on the left comes directly from a middle school level social studies standard. The subsequent descriptors define the student performance necessary to earn a 1, 2, 3, or 4.

Performance Indicator	0. No Evidence	1. Beginning	2. Approaching	3. Meets	4. Exceeds
<i>Compare the major regions of the Earth and their major physical features and political boundaries using a variety of geographic tools.</i>	I cannot yet locate the major regions of the Earth and their major physical features and political boundaries. -OR- I have not yet begun on this standard	I can locate the major regions of the Earth and their major physical features and political boundaries.	I can describe the major regions of the Earth and their major physical features and political boundaries.	I can compare the major regions of the Earth and their major physical features and political boundaries using a variety of geographic tools.	I can analyze and evaluate connections among the major physical features and political boundaries of the Earth using a variety of geographic tools.

**During our transition from traditional grading practices to a more competency-based system, you will encounter both methods of reporting. Because competency-based requires a significant amount of work and time to develop, some assignments, units and standards will continue to be measured and assessed with traditional practices.**

### Homework and Practice

Homework serves a valid purpose because it provides practice in needed skills, enriches and extends the school experience, develops responsibility, and brings students in contact with out-of-school learning resources. In addition, “homework and practice” has a strong correlation with student achievement. ***It is important to note that not all pieces of student work and practice will receive a grade.*** Often, during the process of learning, a student will be provided only feedback that is intended to guide his/her academic and skill development before receiving a more accurate final/summative grade.

### Late Work

If a student misses a due date, it is still expected that the work is completed to the best of his/her ability and turned in to the teacher as timely as possible. Late work still receives full credit for purposes of an academic grade that provides accurate documentation of student learning and the development of academic competency. However, it must be realized that *missing due dates will have a significantly negative impact on the student’s grade for **Habits of Work**.*

### Attendance and Make-up Work

Every student is encouraged to have regular attendance at Holmes Middle School. Attendance is a high priority at school because it is a life-long requirement for future ambitions and careers. Absence for any reason affects both individual student progress and instruction of the class as a whole. Therefore, absences should be kept to a minimum. Whenever a student is absent from school, the student will be given the opportunity to make up work. For “Pre-arranged Absences” or work assigned before the absence is due upon return. When the student returns, he/she should take responsibility to clarify with the teacher what work needs to be made up. Likewise, during absences, students and parents can access **Schoology** for assignments, lessons, and resources.

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### Habits of Work (HOW)

Quality habits of work as outlined below are an essential part of students' future successes in high school, college, and/or career. Students receive a separate HOW grade in each course. There is a clear correlation between quality Habits of Work, academic achievement and learning. The better one's Habits of Work, the more he/she will achieve and learn.

Habits of Work are regularly assessed in each course and each marking period, using the same grading scale (1-5). It is important to note that the HOW score for any course is determined by the most limiting factor. For example, if a student receives a 5 in Work Completion, a 3 in Meeting Due Dates, and a 5 in Participation, the final quarterly HOW grade for that course is "3" (the most limiting factor). This clearly identifies the Habit of Work that requires the greatest amount of improvement. (Note: There is a **HOW Honor Roll** for all students who earn a 3 or higher for a HOW grade in every class.)

### Defining Important Terms

**Complete:** *What does it mean to complete a task?* A piece of work is considered "complete" when it meets the teacher's criteria for acceptance based upon an expected and communicated level of quality and completion. Simply handing in a piece of work does not constitute "complete" until it meets or exceeds the established criteria.

**Due Dates:** Each assignment will have a specific date when it is expected to be turned in to the teacher and considered to be "on time." The ability to meet such Due Dates is an important skill for continuing education, college, and career. Even though late work is accepted, each student's ability to meet due dates is tracked and used as an important factor to determine a student's HOW grade (See below).

**Deadlines:** Deadlines are the end of the grading period ultimately determined by the end of each quarter. Once the end-of-quarter deadline has passed, incomplete work for the quarter can no longer be made up. The only exceptions are for those students who have received a HOW grade of 3 or 4 (indicating he/she is working hard) in that specific course for that quarter and will use the extension to meet or exceed the standard. Other extenuating circumstances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

**Redo's and Retake's:** Individual students have the opportunity to "redo" or "retake" any graded assignment or summative assessment only if his/her HOW grade in that course demonstrates he/she is working hard indicated by a HOW grade of 4 or 5. In this manner, the student has earned the opportunity to be re-assessed. We want students to appreciate that "hard work pays off."

**Incomplete:** As described above, the grade of "incomplete" may be granted at the end of a quarter in the event of an extended excused absence, a student who has earned a HOW grade of 4 or higher and will use the additional time to meet or exceed the standard. It is important to note: if a student has a HOW grade lower than 4 and is not meeting academic standards, the student will not be granted two additional weeks and his/her grade remains the report card.

**Participation:** There are many facets to effective participation. To fully engage, students should be prepared for class with all necessary materials and pre-requisite tasks complete. While in class, participation includes paying attention, following directions, engaging in all activities, being a positive contributor and collaborator, and using your time effectively. It is important to realize that disruptive behavior, behaviors that trouble others, or any actions that result in an office discipline referral will negatively impact a student's Participation score.

*(Important Note: The communication of extenuating circumstances that interfere with meeting due-dates requirements may provide allowances and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.)*

(Refer to Table on Next Page)

**Habits of Work (HOW)**

<b>HOW:</b>	<b>1 Insufficient Evidence</b>	<b>2 Beginning</b>	<b>3 Approaching</b>	<b>4 Meeting</b>	<b>5 Exceeding</b>
<b>Completing Assigned Tasks</b>	Student has completed less than 25% of the assigned tasks.	The student has completed 25 – 69% of all assigned work and tasks including homework, class-work, and group work (graded and non-graded).	The student has completed 70% or more of all assigned work and tasks including homework, class-work, and group work (graded and non-graded).	The student has completed 85% or more of all assigned work and tasks including homework, class-work, and group work (graded and non-graded).	The student has completed 100% of assigned work and tasks including homework, class-work, and group work (graded and non-graded).
<b>Meeting Due Dates</b>	The student has met less than 25% of the assigned due dates.	Turns in satisfactorily completed tasks and assignments on time 25 - 69% of the time.	Turns in satisfactorily completed tasks and assignments on time at least 70% of the time.	Turns in satisfactorily completed tasks and assignments on time at least 85% of the time.	Turns in satisfactorily completed tasks and assignments on time 100% of the time.
<b>Effective Participation</b>	The student has effectively engaged less than 25% of the time.	Effectively engages in all class activities 25 - 69% of the time. This requires bringing essential materials for the class and a positive attitude.	Effectively engages in all class activities 70-84% of the time or more. This requires bringing essential materials for the class and a positive attitude.	Effectively engages in all class activities 85-94% of the time or more. This requires bringing essential materials for the class and a positive attitude.	Effectively engages in all class activities 95% of the time or more. This requires bringing essential materials for the class and a positive attitude.

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**NOTE: This page contains complex descriptors of *Essential Non-Academic Competencies*. We need to adapt these concepts to more middle school-friendly language.**

**Also, please understand that these sets of competencies will be intentionally targeted and developed, but will not be part of a student's report card at this time.**

<b>Non-Academic Competency Skill Groups</b>				
<b>UNDER CONSTRUCTION: Concepts need to be adapted to middle school-friendly language)</b>				
	<b>1 - Beginning</b>	<b>2 - Approaching</b>	<b>3 - Meeting</b>	<b>4 - Exceeding</b>
<b>Self-Direction</b>	Responds to opportunities to identify and distinguish learning goals from performance goals, establish a plan, and monitor their personal progress. Beginners express and explore interests, imitate strategies used by others, and are self-motivated.	Seeks opportunities aligned with interests. They develop project-specific learning goals, plan, and regulates with help, seeking support when needed.	Utilizes their learning strategies to plan, monitor, and adjust the learning process, while looking for ways to meet personally meaningful goals. Positive Engagement is based on effort, effectiveness, or motivation.	Reflects on past experiences, strengths, long-term goals and aspirations to analyze learning opportunities for ways to optimize the process, outcome, and their development. They pursue collaborative opportunities with purpose to enhance their learning and growth.
<b>Communication</b>	Explores between formal and informal communication styles, understand and convey explicit meaning, models observed conventions, and tries different approaches with support.	Identifies various modes of communication, are aware of non-verbal communication, recognizes dual meanings with support, and monitor engagement.	Able to use appropriate language within a social setting, evaluate how they interpret messages, to honor behavioral and thinking preferences, and regulate and adjust their approach to minimize unintended impact on others.	Uses experiences to refine goals and approach, develops an interpretive view to infer meaning given the context, tailor content, format, and delivery to audience, and optimize own emotions to elicit intended response.
<b>Collaboration</b>	Acknowledges different perspectives with support, shows empathy, and defers to group for decision-making and task assignment.	Remains open to alternative ideas from others, positively manages conflict, cooperates to keep group work moving forward, and take turns with tasks to be fair.	Values all group members' perspectives, Initiates compromise to move forward, and builds consensus to define roles and tasks that match group members' thinking preferences and behavioral attributes.	Synthesizes groups' strengths in thinking, voice, and balance of power to accomplish the task and overcomes conflict in order to strengthen group.
<b>Creativity</b>	Works within the context and boundaries, works through unfamiliar experiences with support, begins to develop confidence to take risks, and uses feedback to understand when ideas are impractical or irrelevant.	Notices new challenges to their learning style, identifies alternative and innovative ideas, tolerates less structure in their learning, and considers new perspectives shared by others.	Accepts new challenges to their learning style, evaluates the given context and boundaries, and attempts alternative and innovative ideas, navigates between what is personally meaningful and valued by others.	Develops innovation in any setting, constructs new, open-ended challenges, questions the norm, and carries ideas in an uncertain and far reaching new direction.