MS447 BKLYN

MS 447 Student and Family Competency Based Grading and JumpRope Guide

"If we are going to give grades to students -- and we should always consider carefully if grades are warranted -- we had better be sure that the grading system we use actually promotes understanding and learning, communicates to students and their families exactly where they are in their progress towards concrete goals, and offers useful information about how students can improve."
> \- Ron Berger, *Leaders of Their Own Learning*

What is Competency Based Grading (CBG)?

Competency based grading is a way of assessing and providing feedback to students based on how they are progressing towards learning targets. It uses a descriptive scale (such as 1-4) to show how fully a student has mastered the skills and content over time. Unlike on a traditionally graded assignment, where a grade represents a "percent correct", a student's grade on a competency-based task has feedback built in because the levels on each standard show how a student is progressing towards learning targets. Since this feedback is built into the assignment grade, students can reflect on their learning and next steps.

Why is MS 447 using Competency Based Grading?

Competency based grading is aligned to MS 447's vision and approach to education, in which children are active participants in their learning, are provided supportive opportunities for mistakes, resilience, and progress, and can reflect and self advocate throughout the process. Grading and assessment should never be used as a reward or punishment, and competency based grades remove the arbitrary nature of grades and teacher feedback that are often linked to traditional grading. Feedback in CBG is honest and specific.

In shifting to CBG, and considering its implementation within our school, we drew from the practices and wisdom of several local middle schools (MS 839, Tompkins Square Middle School, and Hunters Point Community Middle School), as well as from the research and tools in *Leaders of Their Own Learning* (Berger, et al., 2014 and 2020).

What are learning targets, and are they the same as state standards?

Learning targets are the concrete goals for lessons, projects, units, and courses. They are specific descriptions of what we expect students to learn in each of their subjects.They are written in student-friendly language ("I can.." statements) and often derive from state, national, or city standards. Learning targets provide clear and manageable goals to allow students to better assess their short term and long term progress and successes. Teachers can share the learning targets for the year, a unit, a week, or a lesson with their students so they know exactly what they're working on. Time is spent with kids to make sure that there is clarity about what the learning targets are, and what competency would look like in those targets. And, those learning targets are what we assess students on and what you will see in JumpRope. At MS 447, we also categorize our learning targets into larger, year-long goals called learning outcomes. Our learning targets can be viewed here.

What's a 1, 2, 3, 4?

4: Instructor	3: Practitioner	2: Apprentice	1: Novice
The student's work demonstrates complexity, originality, depth, synthesis, and application within the given learning target. At the instructor level, a student is able to transfer a specific skill in other contexts. They are also able to guide others in their learning.	The student's work fundamentally meets the learning target and the assessment requirements. At the practitioner level, a student demonstrates an understanding of all of the essential skills and knowledge for that learning target.	The student's work demonstrates a substantive attempt to meet the learning target, but the student needs more time to develop a full understanding of the target. At the apprentice level, a student has met the majority (51 percent) of the performance indicators or criteria for that assessment or genuinely attempts to meet the rubric criteria.	The student's work does not demonstrate substantive progress towards meeting the learning target or criteria of a given assessment. At the novice level, a student has not met the majority of performance indicators or criteria for that assessment, or he or she has not genuinely attempted to meet the rubric criteria.

My child has always been high performing. Why are they getting 3s on some learning targets instead of 4s?

In MS 447's competency based grading system, a score of 4 shows proficiency on specific skills that is expected at that point in the year; however, it also represents a high level of rigor. A score of 4 indicates a student has reached proficiency *and* applied knowledge. One useful thing about competency based grading is that it provides a more accurate look at academic achievement by separating non-academic habits like behavior and compliance/completion from academic proficiency in specific standards.

Level 4s
- A level 4 represents grade level proficiency at a high standard of rigor and academic skill
- Students are provided the opportunity to earn a Level 4 in any weight-bearing assignment (Developing Understanding and Demonstrating Competency).
- Checks for understanding can be graded up to a level 3 or a level 4, based on teacher discretion and the nature of the assessment. They are a low-stakes way of providing feedback to students. (Note: Checks for Understanding may or may not be entered into the gradebook.)

What is a level 3?

A level 3 is close to the grade level standard, but not quite there. It is nearing a high level of competency in the skill.

Is a 2 a bad mark?

A 2 indicates that a student is progressing towards the target and is not yet proficient, and has not met the requirements outlined in the assessment and/or rubric. It is important that parents, teachers, and students have straightforward conversations about students' learning and achievement, and convey that learning is an ongoing process. Some concepts and skills are more difficult than others to learn. A score 2 or 3 while learning a new skill or concept is appropriate and not intended to be punitive. Students, over the course of a school year, should have ample opportunities to demonstrate growth in all areas, and improvement over time is reflected in the grades.

What is a Rubric?

Graded assessments will have a rubric that the grade is based on. Rubrics describe what competency in particular learning targets looks like. The chart above is a general rubric describing competency levels overall. Each of our 15 learning targets also has its own specific rubric with competency indicators specific to that target. Those rubrics can be viewed [here](#).

What Are Assessments?

Assessment refers to any task/assignment that helps teachers and students gauge competency in defined learning targets. Learning targets may be attached to any assessment.

What Types of Assessments Do We Use?

Some types of assessments (Developing Understanding and Demonstrating Competency) factor into a student's overall competency level for a class, while others are only for learning and giving feedback (Checks for Understanding) and are not factored in.

Checks for Understanding

These tasks help teachers to assess students' learning, without penalizing them in their final grade. These grades, as well as specific feedback (from teachers, peers, or self-assessment) help students to understand where they are, individually, so that they can make decisions about their learning. Ex: academic tasks, entry or exit tickets, outlines, drafts, graphic organizers, sketches, problems of the day.

Developing Understanding

Students show how well they are able to transfer skills to new contexts. Students, families and teachers are able to assess student understanding at a moment in time. This type of assessment is weighted as 1 in the teacher gradebook. Ex: performance tasks, on-demand writing samples, quizzes

Demonstrating Competency

Students showcase what they have learned in a final product that they work on through multiple rounds of feedback and revision. Final products connect different learning goals and essential understandings. This type of assessment is weighted as 1.5 in the teacher gradebook. Ex: an argumentative essay, design project, PSA, mural, debate.

My child has an IEP or a 504. How will they be assessed?

The modifications and accommodations outlined in your child's IEP or 504 are meant to support their progress on grade-level standards as assessed on a Standards Based Grading system, just as they would in a traditional grading system.

Can assignments be made up or revised?

There are opportunities to make up or redo work. This is because the goal of competency based grading is for students to gain competency in a range of learning targets, so we want to make sure we provide ample opportunities for students to demonstrate this. Here is the Redo Policy:

MS 447 Redo Policy

- Redos may be done for assessments in the Developing Understanding category.
- Redos are not appropriate for Checks for Understanding
- Redos are not for Demonstrating Competency assessments; however, the expectation is that students had several opportunities to learn, practice, and receive feedback on the learning targets prior to the Demonstrating Competency assessment.
- Redos should be done independently after receiving feedback (rubric grades, comments, conversations, office hour, peer feedback, etc.) and should take feedback into account. Redos require students to take part in a reflective process.
- The timeframe for a redo is up to two weeks, and must be done within the trimester of the assignment. The redo due date is set (and announced) by the teacher.
- Students with an original mark of 2 on a given learning target may redo an assignment to reach level 3 or 4 competency.
- Teachers/Departments at times may exercise discretion to set additional parameters for redos in their class. Additional parameters will be announced and described in JumpRope.
- New scores from redos will be updated on the original assignment (rather than creating a new assignment for the redo).

What are Habits of Work (H.O.W.) targets, and how are they different from Academic Competency targets?

Habits of Work are targets for skills that are critical for success in school, college, and life. A student's habits of work are separate from whether the student has mastered academic standards. They include behaviors that can positively or negatively affect academic learning, but that don't measure a student's academic learning itself. The long term learning goal for Habits of Work is "I can set and work towards developing habits that support my academic success" and include timeliness, completion, and reflection. Unlike academic competency standards, they are not based on state, national, or local standards. They provide important information about the work habits that may be supporting (or undermining) strong academic competency. Work habits do not currently factor into a student's overall competency level.

MS 447 Habits of Work Rubric

	Meets expectation (4)	Approaches expectation (3)	Does not meet expectation (2)
Timeliness	I can effectively utilize systems of organization to turn in my homework, classwork, and projects on time.	I can utilize systems of organization to turn in my homework, classwork and projects mostly on time.	
Completion	I can complete a task to the best of my ability so that teachers can assess my progress with the learning targets.	I can partially complete a task to the best of my ability.	

Reflection	I can communicate with my teachers (and parents) about my academic strengths, weaknesses, growth, and goals for next steps (and make adjustments along the way, when relevant).	I can sometimes communicate with my teachers (and parents) about my academic strengths, weaknesses, growth and goals for next steps.	

What is JumpRope?
JumpRope is MS 447's online competency-based gradebook. Students and families can log into JumpRope to see the assessments that have been given, their marks on standards, and their overall competency level for each class.

Logging into JumpRope

Students and families can log into their JumpRope portal on the web at www.jumpro.pe.

Click "login", enter the student's ms447.org email address, and use their Student ID (DOE OSIS #) for their password. Students may also log in with their MS447.org credentials by clicking "Sign in with Google."

Students and their families both use the same login to access JumpRope.

What will I receive at the end of the marking period?
At the end of each trimester marking period, students and families will receive a detailed target-by-target competency progress report, as well as a competency average by subject.

How are grades calculated?
We use a method of grade calculation called decaying average. Decaying average simply means that the more recent the assessment in a given learning target, the more heavily it is weighted, while the value of older assignments goes down. The purpose of this method is to honor growth in student learning without punishing students for where they started.

What does a "U" on my progress report mean?
A 'U' simply means that the learning target has no weighted assessments aligned to it yet, or hasn't yet been graded. 'U's DO NOT affect course grades.

What does an "E" on JumpRope mean?
An 'E' means the assessment was excused and does not need to be completed. An 'E' holds no numeric weight.

What does an "M" on JumpRope mean?
An 'M' means that the assessment is missing–that the student did not turn the assessment in. An 'M' holds no numeric weight, and work is expected to be completed as soon as possible, and not beyond the redo date listed by teachers. If the assessment is not turned in beyond the deadline, it converts to a 1 in the gradebook.

How do I know what my child is missing?
On JumpRope you can view missing assessments. Once logged in, on the sidebar there is a link called "Missing Work." These are tasks that your child's teacher expects them to complete. (There may be other assessments that were not completed (due to illness, for example) that your teacher does not expect your child to complete. Teachers, students, and families should communicate about these types of situations.) Additionally, a level 1 in the gradebook indicates "no evidence" for a particular target. This usually means that the missing work was never turned in and has been converted from "M" to 1.

Doesn't my child need 0-100 grades on a DOE report card to apply to high school?
At each marking period, JumpRope progress report competency grades are translated into grades that high schools can more easily interpret. Parents/Guardians can log in to their NYC Schools Account to see the traditional numeric grades. We have developed a conversion chart that fairly assigns a 1-100 grade to competency based grades, and takes away the external pressure of grades, so that our grading system can be a useful tool for students as they learn and grow.

How can I monitor how my child is doing in their classes on an ongoing basis?
While the progress reports provide a cumulative snapshot of a student's progress three times a year, JumpRope is one tool for understanding how your child is doing and supporting them along the way. Student Led Conferences are also a great way for your child to provide you with a report of what they're doing and how it's going. And we always encourage you to reach out to teachers if you are worried about your child's progress. We also know that, aside from grades on learning targets, kids also need feedback directly from the teachers. Teachers also provide informal and formal feedback to students along the way.