

## **A Guide to Standards-based Learning at CAA**

At CAA, we want to guide students to focus on their learning, not just their grades. Our classes follow a standards-based learning approach in which we focus instruction and assessment on students' mastery of the specific learning goals (standards) for a class, or how well the student understands and can apply the key material in class. Students take ownership of their learning process as they work towards reaching proficiency in learning goals.

The goal of this approach is to provide the teacher, student, and parent as accurate a picture as possible of what students know and are able to do according to the proficiency scales for each learning goal and separately assess the influence of positive and consistent work habits on student learning. 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. This approach encourages a conversation about how the student can master the material for the class.

Students' progress toward proficiency is tracked by performance on tasks that align to the learning goal, which encourages student ownership of the learning and allows the teacher to provide accurate feedback. Students can then revise their work as they move towards proficiency.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

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#### **1. *Why is CAA using standards-based learning?***

The goal of Columbia Adventist Academy is to improve student learning by focusing instruction on the key learning goals and reporting grades that are accurate, consistent, meaningful, and supportive of learning, and the shift to 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 a standard.

## ***2. What does a grade in a standards-based class communicate?***

Grades communicate to our students and their families each individual student's proficiency in relation to the standards on the proficiency scales. Please see our [Grading Philosophy](#) for additional details.

## ***3. How is standards-based grading 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 standards 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, 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 component and standard 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 grade, but are recorded and reported separately.

## ***4. What does a standards-based class look like?***

At the beginning of each unit, the teacher will break down the learning goals 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 standards.

## 5. How will I know what my student needs to know and/or do to master a learning goal?

A proficiency scale is a table used by teachers and students to determine the student's current level of progress toward meeting the standard.

Proficiency scales indicate student achievement as it relates to a given standard and use a four-point system where a score of 3.0 indicates proficiency within a standard. In other words, a student receiving a score of 3.0 has met the standard.

Each of the levels in a proficiency scale builds on the others and explains what learning students must demonstrate through mounting evidence as seen in their course work to demonstrate level proficiency.

*Scale explanations below are for reference only. Please see individual course proficiency scales for specific explanation of expectation.*

Score	Description
4.0	<p><b>In addition to a level 3 score, the student demonstrates in-depth inferences &amp; applications such as:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>These are not just harder tasks, but learning that requires deeper or more rigorous thinking.</i></li> <li><i>Examples of this type of learning may include: applications for real-world use, teaching another person, using information to solve problems in a different context, explaining connections between ideas, demonstrating a unique insight, and/or creative application of skills.</i></li> </ul>
3.5	<i>In addition to a level 3 score, the student demonstrates in-depth inferences &amp; applications with partial success.</i>
3.0	<p><b>While engaged in grade appropriate tasks, the student demonstrates an ability to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>This level is the focus for the entire rubric.</i></li> <li><i>This is the expected level of performance for all students.</i></li> <li><i>This level includes essential outcomes, state standards &amp; related skills &amp; processes.</i></li> </ul>
2.5	<i>The student demonstrates no major errors or omissions regarding level 2 elements &amp; a partial knowledge of level 3 elements.</i>
2.0	<p><b>The student demonstrates no major errors or omissions regarding the simpler details &amp; processes such as:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>This level is the basic learning necessary &amp; serves as the foundation for the higher levels of learning.</i></li> <li><i>Examples of this type of learning may include recall questions, fact-based skills, &amp; basic applications.</i></li> <li><i>This level does not represent partial understanding of the level 3 elements.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>However, there are major errors or omissions with level 3 elements.</b></p>

	1.5	The student demonstrates understanding of all level 2 elements with help & independent understanding of some level 2 elements.
1.0		With help, the student demonstrates understanding of all level 2 elements or some level 2 & 3 elements.
	0.5	The student demonstrates understanding of all level 2 elements.
0		Even with help, the student demonstrates no understanding or skill.

## 6. *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.

## 7. *How does re-assessment work?*

To be eligible to reassess, students may be required to show evidence of the following:

- Reflection on previous performance
- Specific learning goals the student wants to reassess
- Additional practice or study that demonstrates new learning (e.g., corrected errors, completed review assignments, tutoring session notes) as assigned by the teacher. The teacher may require a conference or additional practice before approving a reassessment.

Make a prearranged appointment with your teacher at least 24 hours in advance to reassess.

Please see our [Reassessment Policy](#) for Additional Details.

## 8. *What does the gradebook look like?*

- Each class will have these two categories in the gradebook:

**Evidence of Proficiency** – scored using the 4-point scales; will not immediately affect a student's grade but the scores serve as mounting evidence for the Proficiency Scale Scores category.

**Completed Scale Scores** – a scale score determined by the mounting evidence for each proficiency scale, based upon the conversion chart; scale scores are averaged to determine a term grade.

- Some classes may have these categories in the gradebook:

**Success Skills** – scored for student feedback and progress; may be required for re-assessment, however, will not affect the student’s overall grade.

**Scales in Progress** – a scale score for each scale the class is currently working on, scored according to the current level of assessment, updated as the class progresses, moved to the “Completed Scale Scores” once the scale has closed.

Here is a more thorough explanation of each category:

**Success Skills:** A record of habits and practice that support your learning, tied to experiencing success in becoming proficient in the concepts/skills of the learning goals.

- Teachers may use a scale score or may record points for each assignment.
- Neither the scale scores nor the points entered here will count towards the overall grade.
- Success Skills could contain non-academic factors such as attendance, participation, and preparedness for class.
- Success Skills could also contain practice work done outside of class.
- The nonacademic factors and the practice work will give teachers valuable feedback that will help him/her guide student learning.

While this category does not directly impact the overall grade it does track the influence of positive and consistent work habits on learning. Completion of Success Skills assignments may be required for re-assessment.

**Evidence of Proficiency:** Assess concepts/skills that are taught in this course with the goal of reaching proficiency and beyond.

- These assessments will be targeted to a specific proficiency scale, which students will reference often to measure progress.
- Teachers enter assessment scores based on the 4-point scale in the proficiency scale.
- Assessments are scored according to the proficiency level of the assessment. For example, on an assessment that only covers level 2 material, the maximum score a student can achieve is a 2.
- While assessments entered in this section do not directly record scores that affect the overall grade, teachers use the scores in this category as “mounting evidence” toward the proficiency scale score for each learning goal.
- Mounting evidence is submitted work, completed assessments, in class observations or other metrics.

- Mounting evidence means that the teacher will examine the pattern of scores from the assessments connected to a particular learning goal and will use those scores to assign a summative score for that learning goal.
- Without sufficient mounting evidence teachers cannot calculate a proficiency scale score.
  - Evidence of Proficiency will contain formal and/or informal assessments such as discussions, quizzes, projects, essays and final assessments.
  - Each assessment entry will have the learning goal, the assignment title and the level of proficiency attached to it. An example: **GCER1 - Claim #1 (Level 3)**
  - In general students should expect at least one weekly posting in the Evidence of Proficiency section of the gradebook or an email highlighting the past week's activities.

#### **Scales in Progress:**

- This category does not record any separate assessments.
- This category tracks students' overall progress on current proficiency scales. Teachers will use the mounting evidence from the Evidence of Proficiency category to determine an in-progress scale score.
- This is to help students see real score results and is assessed based on current mounting evidence. These “in progress” scores may fluctuate up or down as students progress through the scale.
- Scores are recorded based on the 4-point scale in the proficiency scale.
- The Max Points entry shows which level on the scale the class is currently assessing.
- The scores entered here do not impact the term grade. Students should look at this category to see their present progress.
- When the scale is completed, it will be moved to the “Completed Scale Scores” category.

**Completed Scale Scores:** Mounting evidence from the Evidence of Proficiency category determines achieved level on each proficiency scale.

- This category does not record any separate assessments.
- Teachers enter scores from 0-4 for each proficiency scale students have attempted.
- A score is assigned from the assessments that students have attempted in class (Evidence of Proficiency category).
- Teachers use the mounting evidence of students' work on a particular learning goal to determine students' overall scale score.
- The final scores from the proficiency scales used throughout the semester will be averaged by FACTS and will give students a traditional grade.
- Please note that the term grade does not reflect progress on scales that are still in progress. Students should check the “Scales in Progress” category to have a more accurate picture of their learning progress.

Conversion Scale	
Scale score	Letter grade
4	A
3.5	
3	A-
2.5	B-
2	C-
1.5	D
1	

## 9. How do I read a progress report?

### Understanding Standards Grade Reporting

Scale level demonstrated in the assessment. \*not points

Maximum level achievable on the assessment.

Assignment due date - see reassessment policy for details on how this date may impact overall grade.

1. Success Skills		Practice Work		Weight = 0.0	
Assignment	Pts	Max	Avg	Status	Due
WB - MLA Reformatting: Scale: TS-WB (Tech Skills - Word Basics)	1.5	2.0	75.0	Valid	08/27
CS - Icons & Folders Research: Scale: TS-CS (Tech Skills - Core Skills)	2.0	2.0	100.0	Valid	08/28
Category Average					
2. Evidence of Proficiency		Assessments		Weight = 0.0	
Assignment	Pts	Max	Avg	Status	Due
WB - Word Reformatting: Scale: TS-WB (Tech Skills - Word Basics)	2.0	2.0	100.0	Valid	08/26
WB - MLA Quiz #1: Scale: TS-WB (Tech Skills - Word Basics)	3.0	4.0	75.0	Valid	08/26
FM - File Naming: Scale: TS-FM (File Management)	1.5	2.0	75.0	Valid	08/26
CS - In Class Observation: Scale: TS-CS (Tech Skills - Core Skills)	2.0	2.0	100.0	Valid	08/26
FM - File Archive: Scale: TS-FM	3.0	4.0	75.0	Valid	08/26
WB - MLA Quiz #2: Scale: TS-WB (Tech Skills - Word Basics)	4.0	4.0	Pending	08/29	
WB - MLA Quiz #3: Scale: TS-WB (Tech Skills - Word Basics)	3.5	4.0	87.5	Valid	08/30
CS - Icons & Folder Test: Scale: TS-CS (Tech Skills - Core Skills)	4.0	4.0	Missing	09/02	
Category Average					
3. Scales in Progress		Reflects level of proficiency on current scales		Weight = 0.0	
Assignment	Pts	Max	Avg	Status	Due
TS-WB: Scale: TS-CS (Tech Skills - Word Basics)	4.0	4.0	100.0	Valid	05/12
TS-CS: Scale: TS-CS (Tech Skills - Core Skills)	3.5	4.0	87.5	Valid	05/26
Category Average					
4. Completed Scale Scores		Closed scales; DOES NOT REFLECT CURRENT SCALE PROGRESS		Weight = 1.0	
Assignment	Pts	Max	Avg	Status	Due
TS-FM: TS-FM (File Management) - SCALE COMPLETED	3.0	100.0	3.0	Valid	09/30
Category Average					
3.00					
Term Grade					
3.00 A-					

ignore

ignore

Assessment name & scale acronym. May also include assessment level.

Completed Scale Scores reflects the grade based on closed scales only. This does not reflect scales in progress. Current progress can be evaluated based on the Scale in Progress category and level performance displayed.

Grade codes may be used to indicate different assessment statuses.  
P= Pending | M = Missing  
E=Excused | INC = Incomplete

Notes may be added as needed to include details pertaining to the specific assessment. This may include reassessment dates or other information.

### Understanding Standards Grading

Evidence of Proficiency Category is the most accurate view of how a student is progressing in learning.

All students are provided with scale copies they reference regularly to track progression through the learning goals.

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

Standards-based grading focuses on measuring students' mastery of a specific set of standards. The grade scale reflects the level of proficiency achieved for each standard. The final scale score for each proficiency scale is averaged and then calculated into a traditional letter grade to determine a grade point average for report card and transcript purposes.

### ***11. Why doesn't my student have a grade yet?***

A standards-based focus is on the learning a student demonstrates over time; therefore, their grade may not be updated as frequently as it was when every daily or weekly assignment impacted the grade. This shift is especially noticeable at the beginning of the grading period when it may take a few weeks for the teacher to collect enough evidence to determine each student's level of proficiency. However, while the overall grade may not change as frequently, the teacher is still recording information on other learning tasks, such as in-class learning activities and tasks that provide important feedback about what work is being done and how well students met expectations.

Please contact your student's teacher at any time if you have questions about your student's grade. Teachers are required to update grades weekly to reflect work completed in class or email a weekly update regarding the class's progress.

### ***12. Why should my student do the practice work/homework assigned in class if it isn't included in the grade?***

Many students feel that in a standards-based class they don't have to worry about anything except the final test. This is incorrect. It is important for students to understand that their teacher is evaluating their performance on learning tasks, or homework and classwork, on a daily basis. Teachers analyze student work to determine growth and improvement towards proficiency of a specific skill or content. When assigning a final score, each teacher has the responsibility to take into account all the work a student completes during the unit. If a student chooses not to do an assignment, not only are they missing an opportunity to practice a skill, or apply a concept, they also miss an opportunity to display mastery of a standard to their teacher.

Please see our [Practice Work Policy](#) for additional details.



***13. 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. Some teachers may use the "Success Skills" category in FACTS to communicate progress in these learning and work habits, however those scores will not be factored into the grade for the class.

***14. 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 assessments need improvement and establish a reassessment plan with the teacher to learn the material and set a date to be reassessed. The most recent score earned on the learning goal will replace the previous 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-based grading.

***15. How will standards-based learning affect my student's GPA and transcript?***

Standards-based grading reports an overall letter grade for each high school course once a proficiency scale score is converted to the associated percentage score. All proficiency scale scores are averaged to calculate the term grade.

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

When a student transfers to a new school, 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 an A-.

***16. What are colleges saying?***

(From Rutland school website)

Grades are used to communicate with students, their families, and also to third parties such as colleges. As we implement proficiency based learning practices, some may worry that these practices will place students from RHS at a disadvantage. To address this concern two organizations, The New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) and the New England Secondary School Consortium (NESSC) convened a meeting of admissions leaders from highly selective colleges in New England.

"Overwhelmingly, these admissions leaders indicate that students with proficiency-based transcripts will not be disadvantaged in the highly selective admissions process. Moreover, according to some admissions leaders, features of the proficiency-based transcript model

shared with the group provide important information for institutions seeking not just high-performing academics, but engaged, lifelong learners.”

### **How Selective Colleges and Universities Evaluate Proficiency-Based High School Transcripts: Insights for Students and Schools**

In addition, admissions leaders shared that they saw great advantage to including Habits of Work information on transcripts.

The reality is that colleges receive transcripts from home-school students, students educated overseas, and students attending public and private high schools. Each high school engages in its own process to report grades and each college engages in its own process to interpret those grades. Legislation has now been passed in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont requiring high schools to develop proficiency based practices, so RHS is not alone in reporting on proficiencies.

To date a long list of schools have signed explicit statements of support for proficiency based practices, including:

[The University of Vermont](#)

[The University of Rhode Island](#)

[The University of Connecticut](#)

[Castleton University](#)

[Harvard College](#)

[The Massachusetts Institute of Technology](#)

The complete list may be found at [Collegiate Statements of Support](#).