

Dear Nickels Parents and Students-

I hope you have all had a wonderful start to your school year! Students are settling into their classes and becoming more familiar with their new schedules and new teachers. Before we get too far into the school year, I wanted to take this opportunity to share a few shifts in the way we provide feedback (grades) on the progress of student mastery of our learning targets (curriculum).

Students receive letter grades on their report card for the first time in 5th grade. Most of us think of letter grades as a measure of student achievement. However, in a typical school that provides letter grades to measure student achievement, many non-achievement elements are woven into the grade (behavior, responsibility, penalties for late work, attendance, work completed outside of the classroom, etc.). At Nickels, we are shifting away from including non-achievement elements when calculating letter grades in favor of using common assessments designed to measure mastery of specific learning targets.

We are now focusing solely on achievement elements over non-achievement elements. Student grades will now be a true reflection of student mastery of the essential parts of the curriculum. We call the essential parts of the curriculum “power standards,” and refer to them as learning targets or “I Can” statements to students. You may have seen this terminology already included in some of the communications coming home from teachers.

Our K-4 elementary schools use a report card system that is “standards-based” and shows parents progress students are making on specific standards using a 1-4 rating system. At Nickels, we will essentially be doing the same thing, but converting the rating system into an overall letter grade for each course. One of the biggest differences you will notice is that students will receive scores in Powerschool for each class based on three categories: 1) Common Summative Assessments, 2) Common Formative Assessments, and 3) Classroom Formatives. A description of all three categories and how they are “weighted” to determine a final grade is shown in the document that follows this letter.

Also included in this packet is a rubric that is used to reflect student responsibility and work ethic. We no longer use responsibility and work ethic to determine academic achievement on

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specific power standards. Instead, we are holding kids accountable by using a separate Responsibility/Work Ethic grade that is posted in Powerschool. This grade can have an effect on "Honor Student" status. Please note the change from "Honor Roll" to "Honor Student" at Nickels. The definition of "Honor Student" and the criteria for earning this distinction is included with this packet.

Another major difference that you will notice in Powerschool is the number of items that are graded for each class. There will be significantly fewer grades posted in Powerschool because we are only assessing student mastery of power standards. This is not to say that we are not teaching ALL standards. Rather, it means that we are only assessing the most essential, foundational power standards. We have created common summative assessments that will be used to determine a final understanding of specific power standards. These are similar to unit tests or exams, and we may have 2-3 of these per marking period in each subject. Similarly, we have created common formative assessments to assess the current level of student understanding and help students improve. We may have a formative assessment every 1-2 weeks to determine how well students are grasping a learning target. Students are allowed to re-take common formative assessments if they did not master the learning target. Teachers use the results of the common formative assessments to guide their teaching. Teachers also meet one time per week before school in their Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) to discuss the best approaches for student learning based on the results of these common formative assessments.

In summary, the primary purpose of grading is to communicate student achievement to students and parents. The secondary reason for grading is to provide teachers with information on performance that will guide their teaching and allow for specific assistance to students where and when they need it. In addition, student involvement in the learning process is critical to establishing positive attitudes toward school and developing goals for the future. Our goal is to provide feedback to students and parents that is meaningful, consistent, and connected to the most essential learning targets. Please don't hesitate to ask for clarification from teachers or from me if the rationale for these changes is unclear. We are looking forward to serving your children and helping them to reach their true potential.

Sincerely,

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Nickels – Assessment of Student Mastery Policy

Common Summative Assessments

- Based on specific power standards/I Can Statements
- Given at conclusion of major units of study
- Cannot be re-taken for a better score

Common Formative Assessments

- Based on specific power standards/I Can Statements
- Given after power standard is taught
- Can be re-taken for better score after student participates in structured intervention time. Low score will be dropped. Mandatory re-take for students who score below mastery on an assessment and optional for those who score at mastery or above.
- The maximum score that can be earned on a re-take is 80% or “mastery” as determined by teacher. In some cases, this might be slightly less or more depending on the number of questions on the common formative assessment.

Classroom Formatives (classwork and homework)

- Examples include Daily Language Practice, spelling, Article of the Week, Vocabulary, Reading Logs, Writers/Readers Notebooks, Daily Math Practice, homework/independent practice, etc.
- Students are responsible for turning in classwork or homework on specified due date. Late work will be reflected in the work ethic/responsibility grade, and will not affect academic grade. All teachers will note “Late” or “Incomplete” in the grade book for assignments turned in unfinished or any time after the due date (unless illness or pre-arranged absence).
- Some classwork and homework will be recognized as completed (no percentage or grade) when turned in, while other classwork and homework may be collected for a grade.

Summary of Grade Weighting by Subject

- **5th and 6th grade Language Arts (Reading and Writing)**
 - 40% of grade based on summative assessments
 - 40% of grade based on formative assessments
 - 20% of grade based on classroom formatives
- **5th Grade Math**
 - 50% of grade based on summative assessments
 - 30% of grade based on formative assessments
 - 20% of grade based on classroom formatives
- **6th Grade Math**
 - 50% of grade based on summative assessments
 - 40% of grade based on formative assessments
 - 10% of grade based on classroom formatives
- **5th and 6th Grade Science & Social Studies**
 - 40% of grade based on summative assessments
 - 40% of grade based on formative assessments
 - 20% of grade based on classroom formatives

Responsibility/Work Ethic Grade

New for this year, students will be receiving a separate “Responsibility/Work Ethic” grade in Powerschool given by their homeroom teacher (with switch and exploratory teacher(s) input). The grade will be based on Responsibility/Work Ethic rubric that is included with this communication. “Late” or “Incomplete” work will be reflected in the work ethic/responsibility grade. Please see responsibility/work ethic grade rubric for how students will be graded. Grade will be posted at the end of the marking period. The responsibility/work ethic grade can affect “Honor Student” status (see below).

Nickels Honor Student Award (replaces Honor Roll)

Definition of “Nickels Honor Student Award”: Nickels Intermediate School seeks to recognize students for their hard work, perseverance, positive attitude, and engagement in school life. The NIS Honor Student Award recognizes students who have achieved mastery or better (typically 80% or above or A’s and B’s) in all subjects, have demonstrated perseverance in their school work, have maintained a high level of engagement in school life, and have shown respect for their peers and their teachers at Nickels Intermediate. At the end of any marking period where a student has met the above criteria, an Honor Student award will be given. Students meeting the criteria for all four marking periods will be recognized at our end of the year awards assembly.

Work Habits Rubric

Name: _____

Quarter: 1st 2nd 3rd 4th

Score: + ____/20 = ____ %

| Score | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| Standard | 5 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| Completes assignments on time | Always/Almost Always completes and turns in homework on time, submits quality work, obtains missing assignments from teacher and revises work to make improvements. | Often completes and turns in homework on time, submits quality work, obtains missing assignments from teacher and revises work to make improvements. | Sometimes completes and turns in homework on time, submits quality work, obtains missing assignments from teacher and revises work to make improvements. | Rarely completes and turns in homework on time, submits quality work, obtains missing assignments from teacher and revises work to make improvements. |
| Shows respectful behavior | Always/Almost Always meets classroom and school behavior expectations, including respecting the rights and differences of others, works well with others, and listens and follows directions. | Often meets classroom and school behavior expectations, including respecting the rights and differences of others, works well with others, and listens and follows directions. | Sometimes meets classroom and school behavior expectations, including respecting the rights and differences of others, works well with others, and listens and follows directions. | Rarely meets classroom and school behavior expectations, including respecting the rights and differences of others, works well with others, and listens and follows directions. |
| Demonstrates readiness skills | Always/Almost Always arrives to class on time with necessary materials. | Often arrives to class on time with necessary materials. | Sometimes arrives to class on time with necessary materials. | Rarely arrives to class on time with necessary materials. |
| Puts forth best effort and uses class time wisely | Always/Almost Always uses time wisely and works toward full understanding of a concept without giving up or letting someone else do the work | Often uses time wisely and works toward full understanding of a concept without giving up or letting someone else do the work | Sometimes uses time wisely and works toward full understanding of a concept without giving up or letting someone else do the work | Rarely uses time wisely and works toward full understanding of a concept without giving up or letting someone else do the work |