

St. Cecilia Catholic School Assessment for Learning Parent Handbook

A Parent's Guide to Assessment, Grading, and Report Cards



St. Cecilia Catholic School Assessment Philosophy

At St. Cecilia, we believe that the primary purpose of assessment is to improve student learning. Fundamentally, assessment is the process of gathering information that reflects levels of student achievement so as to give effective feedback to students and teachers regarding student learning. However, assessment tends to serve slightly different purposes for different stakeholders.



What is Assessment for Learning?

Assessment for learning helps us achieve our mission. It is the process of using an agreed upon set of learning objectives (standards) to drive teacher planning and instruction; to drive assessment of student achievement; to drive specific, descriptive, timely feedback given to students; and to inform the grading and reporting of student achievement.

Research has shown that grading and reporting to specific standards, while using the accompanying strategy of formative assessments and feedback related to progress towards standards, significantly boosts student achievement and motivation.

School Mission

Our mission at St Cecilia Catholic School is the ongoing Catholic formation and education of the whole child in mind, heart, and spirit, in preparation for an adult life of commitment and service.



What's in the handbook?

- Assessment Philosophy
- Effective Assessment
- Assessment Principles
- Assessment and Grading Practices
- Notable Policies
- Academic and Non-Academic Scoring
- Non-Academic Achievement Factors

Effective Assessment

For students, effective assessment is an opportunity to:

- demonstrate what they have learned
- monitor their own learning, set goals, and plan next steps
- understand the benchmarks and the criteria for success
- reflect, share with peers, foster confidence, and build self-esteem

For teachers, effective assessment is an opportunity to:

- determine degrees of prior knowledge before beginning a unit
- identify and support learning differences and learning styles
- ascertain degrees of understanding and achievement at various stages of the learning process
- adjust instructional strategies based on the needs of the students
- evaluate, record, and report student achievement to stakeholders

For parents, effective assessment is an opportunity to:

- become an active participant in the learning process
- be accurately informed of their children's progress
- be accurately informed of their children's strengths, as well as areas in need of support
- assist their children in planning for the future

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Assessment Principles

The following St. Cecilia Catholic School Assessment Principles guide our assessment practices and policies.

The primary purpose of assessment is to improve student learning.

Good assessment is based on a vision of the kinds of learning we most value for students and how they might best achieve those learnings. It sets out to measure what matters most and should capture what is most essential to be learned.

Assessment must be based on an understanding of how students learn.

Assessment is most effective when it reflects the fact that learning is a complex process that is multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in student performance over time.

Assessment must be an integral component of course design.

The teaching and learning elements of each program are designed in full knowledge of the assessments students will use to demonstrate their learning. In addition, assessments are designed with the full knowledge of the teaching and learning students will utilize to demonstrate what they have learned and see the results of their efforts. Effective assessment informs and enhances instruction and should be designed before learning takes place (i.e. Backwards Design).

Effective assessment requires clarity of purpose, goals, standards, and criteria.

Assessment should be aligned to the intended learning outcomes set forth in the Guidebooks for Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment provided by the Catholic Schools Office and the criteria against which we measure success. Assessment criteria in particular need to be understandable and explicit so students know what is expected of them from each assessment they encounter.

Effective assessment requires a variety of measures.

Single assessment instruments typically do not fully reveal students' achievement and how teachers can help improve learning. A variety of assessment tools and strategies are utilized to closely determine the important information and data to help improve student achievement.

Assessment for improved performance involves feedback and reflection.

All assessment methods utilized allow students to receive effective feedback on their learning and performance, so assessment serves as a developmental activity aimed at improving student learning. Assessments also provide students and staff with opportunities to reflect on both their practices and their learning overall.

Assessment works best when it is ongoing rather than episodic.

Student learning is best fostered when assessment involves well-planned and cohesive activities undertaken over time, so that progress is monitored toward the intended learning outcome and the achievement of relevant standards.

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Assessment and Grading Practices

1

Student academic achievement is evaluated according to the academic standards outlined in the Guidebooks for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment provided to St. Cecilia by the Catholic Schools Office of the Archdiocese of Galveston Houston, and derived from the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

2

In grades 1-8 student academic achievement continues to be represented on the report card using a 100-point scale. Grades continue to be calculated using a grade-averaging method of both formative (daily/classwork) and summative (quizzes/tests) assessment.

3

Evaluation of student achievement to the learning objectives does not include non-academic achievement factors such as homework, effort, participation, behavior, etc.

4

Homework, effort, participation, behavior, and other non-academic achievement areas are key elements in the learning process that are evaluated and reported separately.

5

Academic as well as non-academic achievement are equally important and are both taken into consideration when determining student eligibility in all curricular and extra-curricular activities. Likewise, both achievement factors are taken into consideration when determining honor roll and grade promotion.

6

Rubrics are often used when evaluating students' levels of academic and non-academic proficiency.

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Notable Policies

Second Chance Policy

We understand that each child learns, retains, and demonstrates understanding of instructional objectives in different ways and at different paces. The primary purpose of our Second Chance Policy is for students to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and understandings as outlined in the Guidebooks for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. Therefore, the time it takes to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and understandings should not be a factor. We encourage teachers to provide students with second chances to demonstrate their learning, when appropriate or necessary. These second chances should occur after a student has received feedback from the teacher and has demonstrated that effort was made to understand and act upon the feedback. They should be of similar rigor and relevance, and could be, but are not required to be, of the same format as the original assessment. While our primary purpose is the demonstration of learning, we also acknowledge that we are bound by reporting periods and deadlines. Therefore, the number of second chance opportunities given to a student on a particular assessment is up to the discretion of the teaching team (grade level or department).

Homework Policy

Homework can be an important piece of the teaching and learning process. When homework is meaningful, relevant, and used as practice, it can be a powerful tool to improve student learning. The homework assigned to students should align to the practices outlined above, be developmentally appropriate in terms of amount and content, and be considered for feedback purposes only, not included as part of an academic grade. The on-time completion of homework will be a contributing factor in determining a student's Effort grade, which will be reported as a Non-Academic Achievement Factor.

Late Work Policy

The primary purpose of assessment is to improve student learning; therefore, students are given opportunities to submit late work. If a student continuously submits late work or does not turn work in at all, a parent meeting would be scheduled to develop an action plan. Students are given opportunities to complete the missing work. The turning in of late work will be reflected in the student's Effort grade. In the event that work or assessments necessary for a teacher to render judgment are not completed and turned in by the end of a reporting period, that student will receive an NE (No Evidence) on his/her report card until the work is turned in (see NE Policy) and will receive a "Beginning" in Effort.

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General 4-point Scale Rubric

Many St. Cecilia teachers will be using a four-point rubric to assess their students' academic and non-academic performance. The St. Cecilia Four-Point Scale uses the following 'Grade Mark Indicators' to indicate proficiency levels. These 'Grade Marks' will be used to report student achievement (in select classes) and non-academic achievement on the report card.

E

Exceeding Expectations

A very high to outstanding level of achievement

- Achievement exceeds the St. Cecilia grade-level standards.
- In-depth inferences and applications that go beyond what was taught, not beyond the expectations for that grade level.

M

Meeting Expectations

A high level of achievement

- Achievement meets the St. Cecilia grade-level standards.
- No major errors or omissions regarding any of the information and/or processes (simple or complex) that were explicitly taught

D

Developing Expectations

A passable level of achievement

- Student is developing the St. Cecilia grade-level standards.
- No major errors or omissions regarding the simpler details and processes
- Major errors or omissions regarding the more complex ideas and processes

B

Beginning Expectations

An insufficient level of achievement

- Student is beginning to approach the grade-level standards.
- Additional support is needed to demonstrate partial understanding of some of the simpler details and processes.
- Student does not demonstrate some of the more complex ideas and processes.

The 100 Point Scale Grade has not disappeared.

While the E, M, D, & B Grade Marks will be used to report out student achievement on more specific reporting topics, some content areas and non-academic achievement, "Omnibus" Class Grades will still be given out of 100 in grades 1 - 8.

There is no comparison to A, B, C, and D.

The "Grade Mark Descriptors" are designed to show how your child is achieving relative to the grade level standards. The "Meeting Expectations" mark indicates that your child is meeting the grade level standard. Students who are meeting the grade level standards are prepared to be successful at the next grade level.

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Non-Academic Achievement Factors

At St. Cecilia, we believe that there are certain non-academic achievement factors which are essential to student success in life. All St. Cecilia students are assessed on the non-academic achievement factors of Conduct, Effort, and Personal Habits.

NON-ACADEMIC CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS

Behaviors are considered as non-academic achievement factors where the criteria for success is determined by the frequency of the behavior.

E

Exceeding Expectations

Student consistently demonstrates all behaviors associated with the non-academic achievement factor.

M

Meeting Expectations

Student usually demonstrates all behaviors associated with the non-academic achievement.

D

Developing Expectations

Student sometimes demonstrates at least one of the behaviors associated with the non-academic achievement factor.

B

Beginning Expectations

Student rarely demonstrates at least one of the behaviors associated with the non-academic factor.

Conduct

- Respects others' opinions.
- Respects others' feelings.
- Respects others' ideas.
- Respects others' property.
- Follows class expectations.
- Acts as a positive team member.
- Acts with kindness and honesty.
- Demonstrates self control.

Effort

- Demonstrates persistence and perseverance.
- Uses feedback as a tool to improve.
- Shows interest in learning and growing.
- Participates in class discussions.
- Stays on task following activity expectations.
- Turns in all homework and class assignments on time.
- Prepared for class.

Personal Habits

- Wears the complete uniform.
- Follows St. Cecilia grooming and personal appearance expectations (hair cuts, accessories, etc.).
- Demonstrates organization and neatness (cubby, backpack, locker, and desk).
- Picks up after him/herself.
- On time for all classes.

How to Read the St. Cecilia Catholic School Report Card



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2021-2022 Q1
Grade: 08

Mrs. Thompson

Subject	Teacher	Semester 1			
		Q1	Q2	Exam	Avg
Homeroom - 8th Grade	Mrs. Thompson				
<i>Conduct</i>		E			
<i>Effort</i>		E			
<i>Personal Habits</i>		E			
<i>Comments</i>					
8th Grade Art	Mrs. Poche	E			E
<i>Conduct</i>		E			
<i>Effort</i>		E			
<i>Comments</i>					
8th Grade English	Mrs. Thompson	92			92
<i>Conduct</i>		E			
<i>Effort</i>		M			
<i>Comments</i>					
8th Grade Literature	Mrs. Thompson	95			95
<i>Conduct</i>		E			
<i>Effort</i>		E			
<i>Comments</i>					

Non-Academic reporting marks for Conduct, Effort, and Personal Habits

Comment section for teachers to remark on student's strengths and areas of opportunity

The class grade is calculated using the traditional grade-averaging method out of a 100-point scale.

Grade Key: A+ (99-100) A (95-98) A- (93-94) B+ (91-92) B (88-90) B- (86-87) C+ (84-85) C (80-83) C- (78-79) D+ (76-77) D (72-75) D- (70-71) F (69>)
Non-Academic Factors Key: E (Exceeding) M (Meeting) D (Developing) B (Beginning)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Absent	0	0	0	0	0
Tardy	0	0	0	0	0

Signature: 

This key describes the grade marks used to represent student achievement.

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Grading and Assessment Glossary

Assessment refers to all of the materials and procedures used to: collect evidence of student achievement, evaluate student learning and provide feedback, record student learning, and report student achievement.

Common Assessments are assessments developed by a team of teachers to assess a few selected benchmarks. The assessments are evaluated by teachers other than that of the students who took the assessment. Results are used by teachers and leadership to analyze school-wide practices and curriculum.

Conduct is defined as the frequency with which a student: respects other people's opinions, feelings, ideas, and property (i.e. refrains from bullying, name calling, laughing at, making fun of, stealing, etc); follows classroom expectations (i.e. does not interrupt others while speaking, does not distract or disrupt class, exercises self-control of impulsive behaviors); acts as a positive team member; and acts with kindness and honesty.

Effort is defined as the frequency with which a student demonstrates effort in his or her daily work as observed by the teacher: demonstrating persistence and perseverance in his or her work, positively responding to feedback, showing genuine interest and curiosity in learning and growing, participating in class discussion, engaging in learning tasks, turning in all completed class work and homework assignments on time, and being prepared for class.

Evaluation is the rendering of judgment of one, or a group of, assessment(s) used as evidence of student achievement based upon comparison of the evidence to our St. Cecilia learning objectives.

External Assessments are assessments that are developed and assessed by external test developers and are used by teachers and the leadership team to analyze school-wide practices and curriculum.

Formative Assessment, or assessment for learning, happens while learning is still underway. These are the assessments that teachers and students conduct throughout teaching and learning to diagnose student needs, plan next steps in instruction, provide students with feedback they can use to improve the quality of their work, and help students to see where they are going or where they have been, and feel in control of their journey to success. The ultimate goal of formative assessment is to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes (Stiggins).

Grading is the attachment of a grade symbol (usually a number or a descriptor) to one, or a group of, assessment(s) based upon comparison of the performance score to the St. Cecilia learning standards.

Guidebooks for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment is the St. Cecilia "curriculum" provided by the Catholic Schools Office of the Archdiocese of Galveston Houston, and derived from the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

Ongoing Assessments are assessments that take place while the learning is still going on. These assessments should be formative in nature.

Personal Habits is defined as the frequency with which students: wears the complete uniform and adheres to St. Cecilia grooming and personal appearance expectations, demonstrates organization and neatness in personal belongings (i.e. cubby, desk, locker, backpack, etc.), picks up after oneself, and is on time for all classes.

Reporting is the process through which student achievement is formally communicated to parents and other stakeholders.

Summative Assessment is the attempt to summarize student learning at the end of a sequence of instruction. It is designed to provide a formal evaluation of student achievement.

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Q: How is this different from traditional grading?

A: In large part, there are no differences. Grades at St. Cecilia Catholic School are still based on the traditional 100-point scale. Students' grades are typically based on all of the work assigned in class, including classwork, projects, quizzes, and tests. These scores are often arranged in the gradebook based on the type of assignment, and the grades in the gradebook are averaged together for a final grade at the end of a marking period. One difference from the way many parents may have experienced grading is that the academic grade at St. Cecilia does not include points earned (or taken away) for non-academic factors, such as participation, effort, or attitude. A student's non-academic achievement is assessed, graded, and reported out in a separate, yet parallel structure. This separation of academic and non-academic achievement in a student's grade allows for more accurate reporting of student academic achievement, and more effective feedback to inspire future growth and motivation.

Q: Why does homework not count in the final grade, and will that discourage students from completing homework?

A: At St. Cecilia Catholic School, we believe that homework can be an important piece of the teaching and learning process. We believe that when homework is meaningful, relevant, and used as practice, it can be a powerful tool in improving student learning. However, any homework students are asked to do should align to our assessment principles, should be developmentally appropriate in terms of amount and content, and should be considered for feedback purposes only, not included as part of an academic grade. We believe students will recognize that without practice, they will not be successful on the assessments. Homework assignments, participation, attendance, and attitude are not factored into the grading of academic achievement. However, the on-time completion of homework will be a contributing factor in determining a student's Effort grade, which will be reported as a Non-Academic Achievement Factor.

Q: How will my child be assessed?

A: Your students' learning will be assessed in much the same way it has always been assessed using a variety of formative and summative assessments. These tools will 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 class provides the teacher with evidence of student learning.

Q: Are there other schools successfully using these assessment and grading practices?

A: Yes. Other Catholic schools as well as public schools around Houston, around Texas, and around the country have implemented assessment and grading practices to improve learning and accurately reflect student achievement. These practices include, but are not limited to, allowing students to retake major assessments, removing homework from the academic grade, allowing for late work when necessary to assess, and removing conduct, effort, and class participation from the academic grade.

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