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## **HOW TO EARN THAT “A” THAT YOU DESERVE**

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Dear Students and Parents,

This is a brief guide as to how I determine whether a student has earned an “A” for excellent work. I hope that you find this useful.

I determine grades using both quantitative and qualitative measures. That is to say, I focus on scores and participation, curiosity, imagination, perseverance, and attitude.

### Students:

You are always as capable as the highest grade you have earned on any paper and even more so. Realize that your grades are given as a snapshot of your performance. **No person**, no parent, no teacher, or friend can be with you to watch everything you do, say, or think. God alone knows everything about you. Therefore, your grades are one trained person’s assessment of your accomplishment and effort for a particular time period. Every day you make choices as to the type of student you are and each day is a new beginning, a chance to get better and better.

The grade is not the most important part. **WHAT YOU LEARN IS THE IMPORTANT PART. NEVER lose sight of that fact. **LEARNING is the prize!****

Low grades may mean a variety of things:

1. You didn’t understand the assignment. (Ask questions!)
2. Your mind was on something else. (Try to focus.)
3. You missed an important part of the instructions. (Listen carefully to all directions. Reread directions as many times as you need in order to understand. Check back with me and other students to be absolutely certain that you did what was asked.)
4. You forgot to hand in the test, assignment, or notebook. (Ask yourself if this was an “OOPS!” or an ongoing organizational problem.)
5. What you handed in didn’t have your name on it or was too messy to be evaluated. (Remember that you deserve to be proud of your work!)
6. Your teacher made a mistake, forgot you were absent, misplaced your assignment, etc. (I do not expect you to be perfect all the time and I know that I am not always perfect. Please ask when anything is in question.)

## LANGUAGE ARTS

(Writers' Workshop, grammar, punctuation, writing assignments, oral participation, critical thinking, class presentations, reading, spelling, etc.)

### Oral achievement

Throughout the quarter, you will be observed for your ability to both question and explain the ideas we discuss in class. These observations include your participation, vocabulary, and verbal clarity in all subjects in which I am your teacher: math, reading, writing, science, social studies, and religion.

### Reading achievement

Your reading grade is based on the following work:

- Your **weekly reading tests**. This will include comprehension of the stories we read that week along with using the vocabulary words in context. Every test may be corrected and returned to me. I will average the original test score and the returned score for a new revised grade. Parents are welcome to help in the correcting process so that the students get another chance to truly learn from an adult as well as taking responsibility for their own learning.
- **Reading journals/composition books** in which you answer questions based on your reading in class and you enter your reading log entries, which you do for homework most nights.
- My **observations** of your reading in class. This includes listening to you read from our reading anthology Storytown, in small groups (which we have not started yet), reading out loud during grouped or paired activities, and SSR (Sustained Silent Reading) during pack up and dismissal. **You need to have a book in your desk at ALL times** for SSR and times when you finish your assignments early.
- **Book projects, reports, and assignments** which check comprehension and critical thinking. (We will be starting these soon.) We will also be setting goals for AR and I will be using the test scores as a component of your grade.
- **My goal is for you to love reading and become a lifelong reader, always searching for the next book to enjoy and learn from!**

### Spelling

- Your spelling grade is based primarily on your **weekly spelling tests**. I average your test scores by adding all the scores and dividing by the number of tests you took throughout the quarter.
- **Homework is important!** If you don't hand it in on time, forget your name, or misspell your spelling words on the homework, you can expect your grades to be lower. On the other hand, if you do all the homework neatly, completely, accurately, and ON TIME, your grades will reflect your effort and accomplishment.
- **Spelling on your final proof-read stories and written assignments** also counts to raise, confirm, or lower your final spelling grade.

## Writing

Your writing grade is comprised of the following:

- **Writers' Workshop-** We are focused on our personal narratives for our first published class book this quarter. Think to yourself: Do you make good use of my time? Do I use the **writing process**? Do I **plan/prewrite, draft, peer revise, and edit**? Do I publish a good **final product**? Is it my best? Am I proud of my work? (Once we complete our class book, you will begin writing an entire book of your own.)
- **Writing conferences** with the teacher.
- **Personal journal entries**, which reflect the fluidity of your thoughts.
- Specific **writing assignments** for writing (for example poetry, letters, persuasion, etc.), science (for example your responses to science questions, science reports, science labs, etc.), math (for example writing your own word problems, explaining mathematical processes, etc.), and reading (for example book reports and your responses in assignments and homework).
- **Your classroom participation**
- **You will become a published author!**

## MATH

Math grades are determined using a combination of the following:

- **Tests and quiz grades.** Each test can be corrected. I will average the original test score with the returned test score for a new revised grade. I encourage parents to work with their children on anything they may not have understood. I also want to know what they need more help with so that I can find another way to reach them.
- **Homework assignments.** These come from your regular homework assignments from your Saxon math book. It is your responsibility to make sure that your homework is neat, complete, organized, and LABELED with the proper date and assignment. Any score under 90% needs to be corrected and returned. This will improve your score as well as give you another opportunity to learn.
- **Observations in class.** This includes participation in class—questions asked, insights and answers offered and your word problems, composed and solved in front of the class. I observe your willingness and ability to share your strategies with classmates.
- **I want you to feel like a mathematician.**

## SCIENCE

Your science grades are comprised of:

- **Science tests and quizzes.** Again I have an open policy that any test can be corrected and I will average the original test score with the returned score for a new grade.
- **Science journal.** Our science journals will contain the answers to questions on the chapters we cover as well as observational drawings and other scientific uses.
- **Worksheets, drawings, science reports, science lab work, and other assignments (including the science fair project in November)**

- **Observations during science classes.** I will grade your participation (questions and answers), experimentation, use of equipment, cooperation with classmates, and self control.

**I want you to become a scientist!**

## **SOCIAL STUDIES**

Your social studies grades will include:

- **Social Studies tests and quizzes.**
- **Social studies journal** (including grandparents' interview)
- **Social studies worksheets and periodic projects.**
- **Observations during social studies classes.** I will be especially interested in your knowledge and insights gained about our wonderful country.
- **I want you to feel like a historian!**

## **RELIGION**

- **Tests and quizzes from Blessed are We.**
- **Understanding of the changes from What's new about the Mass**
- **Prayers and memorization work.**
- **Observations on participation and understanding of the depth of our faith.**
- **Your daily moral conduct, sense of compassion for others, responsibility and respect in action toward God, people, and all of His creation**

**YOUR QUARTERLY SELF EVALUATIONS** augment your writing, oral, spelling, and reading grades. They can raise, confirm, or lower these subjects and other content course grades. These are explained and given near the end of each quarter. I also use them to inform my teaching, as students are given a chance to evaluate themselves as learners as well as me as their teacher.

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO ME IS THAT YOU ARE LEARNING, IMPROVING, AND DOING YOUR VERY BEST! I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO ALL THE LEARNING THAT WILL TAKE PLACE THIS QUARTER AND FOR THE REST OF THIS YEAR! I want you to be challenged, so if you are in need of supplemental work, we will work together to make that happen!**