

Rolesville Middle School  
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June 10, 2019

Dear Rising Track 1 Eighth Grade Parents,

We are excited to meet your students and welcome them to eighth grade as we start the 2019-2020 school year. As a team of teachers, we pride ourselves on putting the learning of your child at the heart of what we do. One way that we work to build a growth mindset in students while accurately measuring what they are learning in our classes is the use of a **mastery-based grading system**. This system **promotes student growth and independence** by replacing grades on individual assignments with feedback from the teacher. Teachers write on the assignment what the student did well and what needs to improve. Tests will have an indication of which items were incorrect and encourage students to review their mistakes and retake the tests. Students are taught to act on this feedback to improve their mastery of the course content, and are encouraged to see their learning as a continuous process of improvement. Students collect samples of their work throughout each quarter in a digital portfolio and then use that work to show evidence of their mastery at the end of the quarter. By reflecting on their progress and meeting with the teacher, **students** identify what grade they have earned for that period.

The reason for this system is simple: traditional grading systems are not working for most students. Many students are more focused on their letter grade than on their learning. They see each assignment as an isolated challenge, rather than a step toward mastery. When teachers provide feedback to students on their work, there is little incentive for students to act on this feedback and move forward because many students are singularly concerned with their grade.

More importantly, students are becoming **more active participants in their own learning**. Rather than seeing the teacher as the only judge of their work, they begin to see themselves as valuable decision-makers in the learning process. With guidance from the teacher, students plot their own progress from assignment to assignment and can witness their own growth, reinforcing the growth mindset that we know leads to successful adults. The current grading system was designed to create the obedient factory workers of the last century, not the independent, creative problem solvers that modern workplaces are looking for.

We know that this system will take some adjustment on the part of both you and your child. We will be communicating with you to ensure that your questions and concerns are addressed. We hope that you will ask questions of your student to help them see the importance of learning, not just the letter or number earned. PowerSchool will still show whether your student has turned in an assignment, and you will receive an indication of whether their work is at grade-level or not. We know from our experience that this system will provide more information to you as a parent than the previous letter grade did, allowing you to better support learning at home. You can find this information and more at [rms-eagles.weebly.com/grading](http://rms-eagles.weebly.com/grading).

Best wishes,

#### **Track 1 Eighth Grade Team**

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## Mastery Grading F.A.Q.

Q: Will my student earn grades at all?

A: Yes, at the end of the quarter each student will earn a letter grade that matches their learning from the quarter. Students will work with the teacher to use evidence from the quarter to determine this grade.

Q: How will I know how well my student is doing during the quarter?

A: Using PowerSchool, you will be able to monitor their work, seeing what is missing and what was turned in late. Students will receive feedback on each assignment to help them gauge their performance and encourage second attempts that show more mastery. Each assignment will also be marked with Exceeds Expectations, Meets Expectations, or Does Not Meet Expectations to help you and your child understand the quality of their submitted work.

Q: What is the goal of the change to a mastery-based classroom?

A: We want students to develop an attitude of continuous improvement. Students will spend time reflecting on—and in some cases improving—their work toward mastery of the concepts. We only provide feedback on these assignments so that students have an idea of how to move forward, but are not stifled by the finality of a grade.

Q: How will my child's final quarter grade be determined?

A: First, the student will complete a reflection rubric document in which they assign themselves a grade and identify the work that supports that assessment. Then, they have a brief conference with the teacher to discuss their grade choice. The teacher will provide feedback and help the student to arrive at the most appropriate grade. Then, the grade rubric document is sent home for parents to discuss with the child and sign off on.

End-Quarter Grade Rubric	
Use the descriptions below to choose which level of mastery you believe that you have reached this quarter for each Essential Question. Then, list the major assignments (including projects, tests, and quizzes) that provide evidence of that level of mastery. After meeting with your teacher, you will finalize this grade and then get this rubric signed by a parent before it becomes official.	
Level of Mastery	Description
Mastery (Grade = 100)	I understand the topics discussed this quarter beyond the level of an eighth grader. <b>I can apply the ideas to new situations and examples. I feel comfortable teaching these topics to anyone.</b>
Beyond Proficiency (Grade = 89)	I understand and can discuss the topics in this quarter <b>beyond the level of an eighth grader, answering questions that are in a different form than ones discussed in class.</b>
At Proficiency (Grade = 79)	I understand the topics discussed in this quarter at a level that is appropriate for an eighth grader. I can explain some of the topics from the quarter, but not a majority of them.
Developing Proficiency (Grade = 69)	I do not fully understand the topics from this quarter. I can not confidently explain the topics to someone else or apply them to new situations.
**If you don't feel that you have enough mastery to meet any of these levels, please talk to your teacher.	

Q: What do the levels of mastery mean?

A: During each unit, your child will be working toward mastering the content. At the end of the quarter, your child will be asked to identify what level of mastery they have reached for each unit, along a continuum. They will need to consider how well they understand the ideas, whether they can teach them to another person, and whether they can apply them to new situations. Each level of mastery will be converted into a letter grade at the end of the quarter.