Frequently Asked Questions About Grading and Reporting in the Middle School

1. How are students graded in the middle school?
   Students are graded on a 1-7 proficiency scale. For each number grade, there is a description that outlines the criteria for each proficiency level. Students are assessed on learning outcomes, (standards) at each grade level and in each subject against this grading scale and criteria.

2. How is the 1-7 scale different from traditional letter grades?
   Traditional letter grades typically average points and percentages from all work a student has done over the course of a grading period and includes student behaviors such as tardiness, attitude, and effort. Our 1-7 scale is outcome-based/standards-based, so students’ grades are based solely on how they performed on the academic skills or content of the standards. Students are also assessed on their work habits, effort, and attitudes, but separate from their academic grades.

3. Why does the middle school use a 1-7 grading scale?
   The 1-7 grading scale aligns with the grading scale used in the high school and the IB program. This allows students and teachers to be prepared for the IB grading system in Grades 11 and 12.

4. What is considered ‘passing’ on the 1-7 scale?
   Students receive academic credit for levels ‘3’ through ‘7.’ Students attain proficiency, however, at the ‘4’ and ‘5’ levels. Attaining proficiency is when students meet the requirements of the learning outcomes/standards being assessed.

5. Is it possible for my child to receive a 7?
   As ‘7’ indicates “Exceptional Proficiency,” students are able to attain this very high level of proficiency, however, reaching a ‘7’ is not as common. Teachers are encouraged to share with students models of work at each level of the grading scale so that students understand what is required to achieve at the various proficiency levels.

6. What is a standards-based grading system and what is the purpose of it?
   In a standards-based grading system, students are assessed on established subject and grade level learning outcomes which include knowledge, skills, and processes. The goals of this system are:
   • To provide grades that are meaningful, accurate, and reliable
   • To provide parents and students with more specific information regarding student learning
   • To know areas of strength and areas for growth within a subject or course
   • To know that a grade reflects attainment of academic standards
7. **How do teachers grade in a standards-based system?**

Teachers keep track of students’ grades on assessments across a grading period. At the end of a grading period, teachers determine a term grade based on the most recent evidence to indicate what students have achieved and ultimately learned. When there are a variety of grades based on different sets of standards in a grading term, a teacher uses the median or their professional judgment.

8. **What happens when an ISY student transfers to other schools that don’t use a standards-based grading system?**

Standards-based assessment and grading is now found in schools throughout the world. Though, when a student transfers to a school that has a different grading system, the ISY counselors work with families and the receiving schools to ensure a smooth transition of student information.

9. **What is a rubric?**

A rubric is a scoring tool that outlines and communicates to students the criteria of attaining specific learning outcomes of an assessment at each of the proficiency levels on the 1-7 grading scale. Rubrics or other checklists are provided when the assessment is assigned/given so students know what they are being assessed on.

10. **What part does homework play in a standards-based system?**

Homework is assigned for a specific purpose—for practice related to the standards/learning outcomes. Homework, or home practice, may be part of a summative assessment if it is, say, a research paper or project, or final writing draft.

11. **Since homework completion is not a part of an academic grade, how are students held accountable for completing their homework?**

When students do not complete an assignment, they are assigned to study hall either during lunch or after school. If a child consistently does not complete work, parents are notified. Practice is integral to success, therefore, when students do not complete their homework practice, they may not achieve at a desired proficiency level. Students are also assessed on their work completion and effort on the ‘Habits and Attitudes’ portion of the report card. Finally, if a teacher does not have enough evidence to provide an accurate term grade due to a student’s lack of work completion, then a student may receive an “I” (“Insufficient Evidence”).
12. Are students allowed to retake an assessment?

Students are allowed to retake an assessment when they can demonstrate a commitment to improvement. This supports the idea of a ‘growth mindset’ that seeks to instill in students the results of effort, hard work, and lifelong learning no matter the proficiency level in which a student is performing. A retake or redo at ISY can only be given once on a given summative assessment.

13. How are student behaviors that relate to learning assessed in the middle school?

Students’ habits and attitudes are important to learning, achievement, and their overall well-being. To that end, students in the middle school are assessed on three areas: “Preparedness,” “Engagement,” and “Initiative”. Each area has a list of criteria, and students are assessed on these criteria using a frequency scale (“Consistently Evident,” “Usually Evident,” “Sometimes Evident,” and “Rarely Evident”).