Dear Parents/Guardians:

As we embark upon the school year, we would like to share revisions to the Friday Folder and communication around behaviors, effort, and conduct for the 2019/2020 school year.

Columbia Public Schools is continuing our implementation of Standards Referenced Grading (SRG). In education, the term standards-referenced refers to instructional approaches that are aligned to learning standards — i.e., written descriptions of what students are expected to know and be able to do at a specific stage of their education. In other words, standards referenced refers to the use of learning standards to guide what gets taught and assessed in schools. Essential to standards-referenced learning is the use of the standards to identify, for teachers, students, and parents, what the students must know and be able to do by the end of the learning (Marzano, 2018). This includes priority standards in the area of behavior, effort, and conduct; separate from the academic levels of proficiency. In CPS, we call these Success Ready Skills.

The four areas of Success Ready skills are Work Habits, Interactions with Peers, Interactions with Adults, and Personal Growth. Work Habits will be the first area communicated and reported in the 19/20 school year. Additionally, Interactions with Peers and Adults scales will roll out and then Personal Growth (Goal Setting).

Please see the Frequently Asked Questions page on the back of this letter for more information on parent communication, Success Ready, Back to School Nights, and Parent Teacher Conferences.

We understand that these are changes for families and their children and are here to support you in any way necessary throughout these transitions. Please reach out with questions, comments and concerns…your opinion and ideas are very important to us!

Thank you!

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FAQs

Q 1. What is the advantage of Standards Referenced Grading?

A 1. The advantages are improved communication and additional feedback for parents, students, and teachers. Teachers will know which standards they need to teach and/or re-teach. Students will know which standards will need additional learning opportunities and/or practice. Further, all schools will have the same expectations of what is proficient for each standard. The result is greater equity across buildings.

Q2. Why separate academics from behaviors?
A 2. Proficiency scales for behavior or life skills should be in place. Using proficiency scales clarifies expectations for behaviors and work habits to provide parents and students with a clear picture of these factors as part of learning and development process. Using separate scales for non academic factors can help teachers better affect student behavior through a learning approach rather than just a discipline approach. Non Academic scales also allow teachers to clearly communicate a student’s progress or lack of progress in very specific and important aspects, such as work completion and effort, on the report card. (A Teacher’s Guide to SRG)

Q 3. Shouldn’t attendance, effort, and completion of homework be rewarded?

A 3. Yes, those things are important; however, they should not be included in an academic grade. These are behaviors, not academic standards. Students should be held accountable for these behaviors. And, they should be given an opportunity to learn, receive feedback, and an opportunity for growth in these areas. Specific goals provide a clear direction for behavior and a clear indication of desired performance, and as such they serve as motivators. (Marzano, 2009--pp. 4,6) Their progress in these areas utilize the Success Ready Scales and are reported in their Friday Folders and under Success Ready on their Progress Reports and Report Card.

Q 4. How do I find out more information about Success Ready and Friday Folders?

A 4. Information will be communicated and distributed on Back to School Nights, PTA meetings, in the Quarterly Newsletter, via your school website, and at Parent Teacher Conferences.

Sources
