

## Benchmark and Rubric Assessment Explained

Central to the Lake Eola Charter School philosophy is benchmark and rubric scoring. This method of grading allows teachers, students, and parents to monitor academic progress more precisely than more traditional methods of grading. Instead of receiving a single letter grade for a class, students receive rubric scores on individual benchmarks. This system ensures that teachers' lessons focus on the most important skills and concepts in each subject, and that assessments measure students' mastery of them. So, what are benchmarks and rubrics?

Benchmarks are specific skills, concepts, or information that make up the curriculum in each subject area. Most schools have benchmarks. The difference at LECS (and other cutting-edge schools and school systems throughout the country) is that instead of receiving a grade in each subject area, LECS students receive scores on individual benchmarks. Before a score can be recorded for a benchmark on a report card, teachers must give at least three assessments on that benchmark. Some benchmarks, particularly in science and social studies, are covered in a single trimester, while others may be scored all three trimesters or may remain the same over several years of school. When the score appears on the report card, parents can be assured that the score represents the students' quality of work and mastery of that specific benchmark

Rubric scoring is a method of grading for mastery. Instead of "earning points" towards letter grades, students must demonstrate mastery of the skills, concepts, or information covered in the benchmark. Teachers constantly create rubrics that show what constitutes mastery on specific assignments, and the report cards give the basic rubric for all benchmarks. In grades 3-8, a 4.0 means the student has mastery; a 3.0 means the student is proficient; a 2.0 means the student is still in progress of learning; and a 1.0 means the student has minimal understanding of the benchmark. Similarly, in grades K-2, an "E" means that student has exceeded expectations; an "M" means the student has met expectations; "IP" means the student is still in progress of learning the benchmark; and an "N" means the student needs improvement.

Rubric scores on benchmarks in no way relate to traditional grades of A, B, C, D, and F, which are generated from work on many different benchmarks and then averaged mathematically. The purpose and goal of benchmark and rubric scoring is that the scores assess students' mastery in specific, well-defined areas. The advantage to students of this system is that they know they must show mastery of the benchmarks to earn strong scores. The advantage to parents is that they know specifically what skills their children have mastered and what skills still need work. At LECS, scores truly reflect students' skills in each subject area, which keeps everyone focused on learning for mastery!