Dear parent(s),

Our Freshman English team’s grading system is probably a little different than you may be used to. We will assess students based on standards drawn from the Common Core (check out www.corestandards.org to find out more about these) that describe reading, writing, speaking, language, and listening skills that every student should possess by the end of a specific course. Since this transition has the potential to cause some confusion, we wanted to get in contact and help you get a better understanding of how it works.

Here are a few things to keep in mind:

* We will be using **two categories of assignments** in Skyward, our grade reporting system. They are *Competencies* and *Assessments*. *Competencies* will make up the bulk of their grade (about 90%), and they reflect how well a student was able to demonstrate their understanding and application of each standard. *Assessments* are a smaller percentage (About 10%), and they reflect how well they perform on quizzes and smaller assignments that will be handed out periodically.
* **Each student will be evaluated based on a total of 11 competencies.** Each of these competencies will be worth 100 points.
* **Competencies will be scored based on a four-tiered system, but we will translate them into traditional letter grades for your convenience.** Based on a student’s performance, he or she will receive a score ofEmerging (50%, or an “F”), Basic (65%, or a “D”), Proficient (75%, or a “C”), or Advanced (100%, or an “A”). A student that does not attempt to meet a standard may be given a “0”. You’ll notice that there isn’t a “B” included in this system, but students who perform excellently in some categories and proficiently in others tend to average out to a “B”.
* **Students will likely have low scores in their competencies at first.** They should, because they have not learned how to do these things yet. Don’t freak out, because…
* **Students will be given multiple opportunities to improve their scores in the “Competencies” category.** If a student shows an improvement in a specific competency either through revision or later performance, his or her score will be changed to reflect that improvement and the lower grade will be dropped.

After much research and work with various assessment systems, we’ve found that standards-based grading is ultimately the most accurate, authentic, and student-centered approach to assessment. It bases a student’s grade on learning and growth, rather than the ability to fill out a form and turn it in on time. It will also better prepare students for standardized assessments that they will eventually need to graduate.

Please feel free to call or email your student’s teacher with any questions you may have. They will be happy to set up a meeting to explain in more detail.

We are looking forward to getting to know you and your student this year.

Sincerely,

The Freshmen English Department