

# Our Grading Policy and Testing information

Educational Harbor Christian is unique in that we don't give out letter grades until high school. This is based on scientific studies that show children who receive formal letter grades put more emphasis on the letter grade than on the material learned. Most students don't remember material and concepts after only a few weeks after the test. So what do we do instead?

- Provide an anecdotal progress report that tells, in narrative, what the student is working on, how they are progressing, whether they are working "on level" according to other peers their age, and what we plan to do in the future. (Please see the following page as an example)
- Teachers keep a running observational record of what the student is doing in class.
- Teachers typically communicate daily (or at least weekly) with parents on progress. This happens naturally through texting and during drop off / pick up.

## Testing

- 1) We do NOT give the FSA
- 2) We do NOT teach common core
- 3) We DO assess students to figure out where they are and what they need.
  - a. Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) – the student reads a "grade-level" text to the teacher, tells what it is about, and engages in interpretations of the text. This doesn't begin until 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.
- 4) We do give an optional standardized test called the "Iowa Basic Skills Test" in April. This test allows teachers and parents to get a clearer picture as to how the student is doing based on other students in the U.S. This test has been around for over 50 years and gives good feedback to parents and teachers. It is also much shorter – for example, reading comprehension is two 30 minute sessions instead of 4 two-hour days.
  - a. Not until 3<sup>rd</sup> grade unless requested by the parent.
  - b. Parents can discuss opting out with the teacher. The only students who may NOT opt-out are those on the Step Up for Students Scholarship.
  - c. The results are not shared, collected (except at the school for record keeping purposes), or shared online.
  - d. The results are not used to penalize teachers, students, families, or the school – only to get an idea of where the student is.
  - e. Usually, results are not even communicated to students

## Grade Levels

- Our grade levels are very fluid in that students work where they are at, not at their "grade" (unless those two happen to correspond)
- When students complete the requirements for 5<sup>th</sup> grade, they go to Middle school, assuming they are mature enough and it is agreed upon by the parent and teacher.
- When students complete the requirements for 8<sup>th</sup> grade, they go to High school.
- Students don't HAVE to spend an obligatory number of years in any particular Cohort.
- Conversely, they can spend extra time in a cohort if necessary – i.e. 4 years in Cohort 3 if they need it.
- Yes, the grade level transfers if they go back into public / traditional education.
- We focus on reading level, math level, and writing level to determine whether they are ready to move.