

Metropolitan Learning Center Assessment Policy

I. Philosophy – MLC’s approach to assessment

Our core beliefs about assessment

MLC’s philosophy and policies about assessment have been shaped by the CREC mission and vision, our own beliefs and experiences as MLC educators, and the standards and practices of the IB Middle Years Programme.

First, we believe that assessment, like all parts of the learning process, empowers students to become independent and capable learners and citizens. Through assessment, students are able to:

- recognize their learning styles and ways they can grow in other styles;
- understand that cultural experiences and expectations influence how they and other individuals learn;
- prepare for different types of learning and performing in ways that make sense for success;
- reflect on their preparation and performance so that they can identify areas of strength and areas for growth and improvement; and
- expect and provide constructive, useful, timely feedback from (and to) teachers and peers – and use feedback to improve their future performances.

These beliefs dovetail with the IB Middle Years Programme’s assessment aims. Specifically, these aims are that assessment at IB World Schools should:

- support and encourage student learning by providing feedback on the learning process;
- inform, enhance and improve the teaching process;
- provide opportunity for students to exhibit transfer of skills across disciplines, such as in the personal project and interdisciplinary unit assessments;
- promote positive student attitudes towards learning;
- promote a deep understanding of subject content by supporting students in their inquiries set in real-world contexts;
- promote the development of critical- and creative-thinking skills;
- reflect the international-mindedness of the programme by allowing assessments to be set in a variety of cultural and linguistic contexts; and
- support the holistic nature of the programme by including in its model principles that take account of the development of the whole student.

(p. 78, *From Principles into Practice*)

As a result of basing our assessment policy on these beliefs and aims, *how* we assess at MLC is different from how other secondary schools assess students.

Assessments, defined

At MLC, we believe that “assessment” means more than tests and quizzes and scores. Instead, we define “assessments” more broadly, as important tools in developing students’ skills and knowledge. They provide valuable feedback to students, parents, and teachers about students’ progress throughout the learning process.

We distinguish between two types of assessment, formative and summative:

<p>Formative assessment is assessment <i>for</i> learning.</p> <p>Formative assessments are used by teachers and students as evidence for: deciding how students are doing in their learning, what they still need to accomplish, and how they can achieve it.</p> <p>Formative assessment might include practice or rehearsal of skills students will need to perform on summative assessments.</p>	<p>Summative assessment is assessment <i>of</i> learning.</p> <p>It is used to evaluate student achievement. In other words, it is what you probably know assessment to be: a way to measure how much a student learned during a period of study.</p> <p>Summative assessments might include tests or papers, but they could also include projects, presentations, or other creative ways for students to convey their learning.</p>
---	---

How assessment fits into teaching and learning at MLC

Teachers design their courses’ units of study *backwards* – that is, they begin by identifying the unit objectives for a particular unit (what concepts, content, and skills students should know and be able to work with/do), then they design summative assessments.

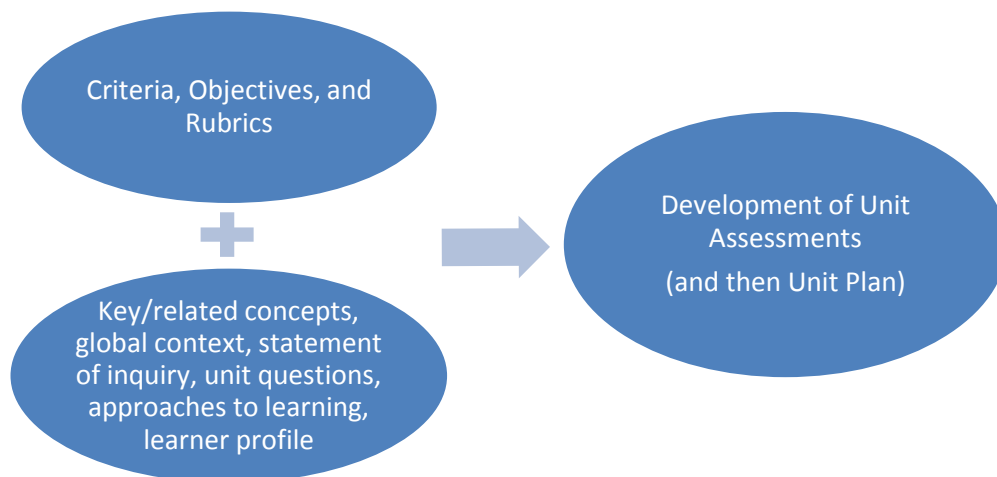


Figure 1. Summative assessment design

From there, teachers create formative assessments, and then, after all of that planning and creating, they develop the day-to-day lessons for that unit. We do things this way so that every lesson and every day of learning is aligned to learning goals. This helps students to make sense of their learning, by framing their everyday learning with bigger goals and objectives.

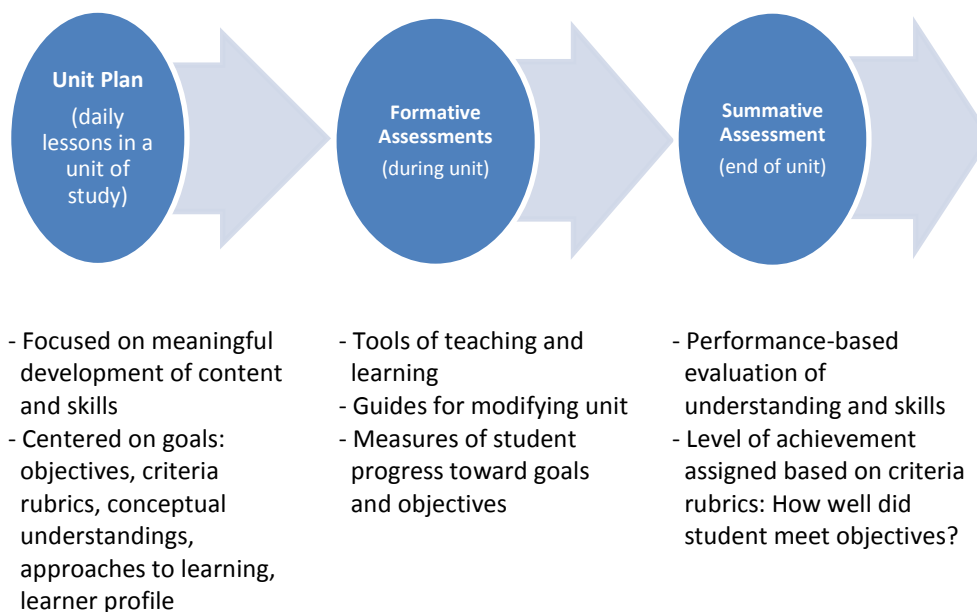


Figure 2. Progression of learning & assessment during a unit

Assessment in Action at MLC:

The single most important aim of MYP assessment is to support and encourage student learning. This means that teachers gather and analyze information on student performance and provide

feedback to students to help them to be empowered to improve their performance. It also means that students have a responsibility to evaluate their own progress using self-assessment and reflection. Through all of this, students develop effective critical-thinking and reflection skills.

Assessment in the MYP is called a **criterion-related** model. Student work is assessed against criteria, or broad skill areas, in each subject. Every subject at MLC has four criteria for assessment; for each individual criterion, the highest level of achievement is 8.

The reason that this is so helpful is because before they do any work, students know what needs to be done in order to reach a high level of achievement. It also allows teachers to explain expectations in ways that are clear and consistent.

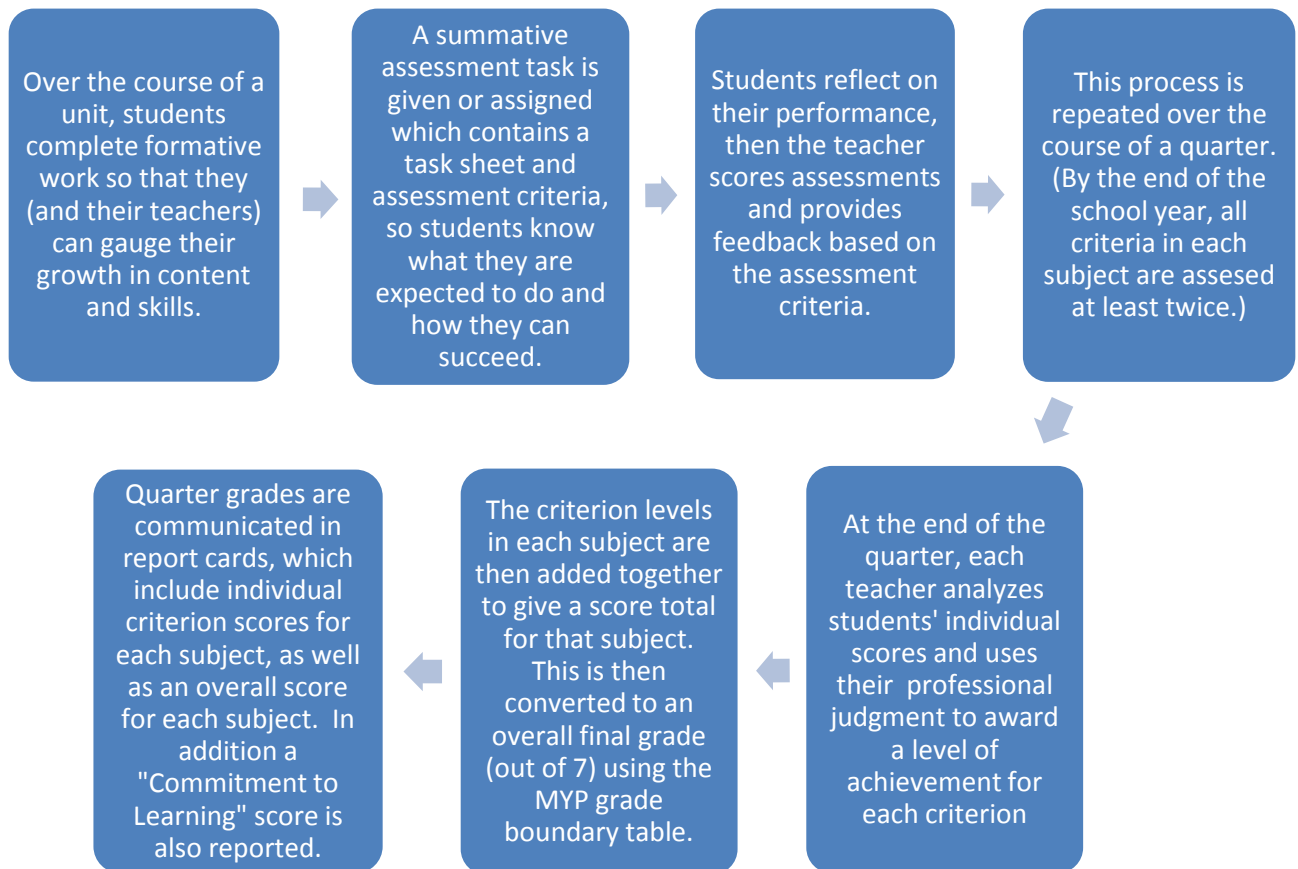


Figure 3. Process of assessment, unit-specific

II. How Assessment Works at MLC

Key Points

1. Assessment at MLC is criterion-related; however, the MYP and DP use different subject-specific criteria and descriptors for achievement on criterion rubrics. Please see Appendix A for the complete lists of MYP and DP subject criteria.

2. Percentages are not used in criterion-related assessment, and therefore are not used at MLC. Levels of achievement in assessment criteria, therefore, do not translate to percentages.
3. Extra credit and class participation grades are not used in criterion-related assessment, and therefore are not used at MLC. Instead, a “Commitment to Learning” (CTL) score is determined for students in each course. This CTL score reflects a student’s work habits and attitudes in each course. Please see Appendix B for MLC’s Commitment to Learning rubric.
4. Formative assessment is used for *practicing* skills, learning content, and developing understanding. Summative assessment is used for *showcasing* mastery of skills, content, and understanding.
5. Each assessment must allow students to reach the highest levels of achievement on a given criterion rubric. In other words, students should be able to reach an “8” on each assessment they are assigned (though not all students will achieve that level).
6. For the MYP, students are provided with their own copies of MYP criteria for each subject and year. These rubrics are used to assess formative work. For summative assessments, teachers tell students in advance which criteria will be assessed, and provide students with task-specific rubrics that clarify how the criteria apply to the task.

Task-specific assessment rubrics are developed and applied to all summative assessment tasks. These rubrics should link the subject criteria’s level of achievement descriptors with task-specific clarifications.

A well-constructed rubric should:

- Be clear to students;
- Provide clear, measurable evidence of learning for the assigned task; and
- Link generic descriptors and their command terms to task-specific clarifications.

7. The final level of achievement for both MYP and DP courses is 7.
 - a. Each subject’s four criteria have a maximum level of 8, as does the “formative performance” category.
 - b. To determine a level of achievement (grade) in a given course, add up a student’s levels of achievement in each criterion and the formative performance category.

Then, apply the MLC grade boundaries to that total to determine the final level out of 7.

For example, a student needs to achieve at least 35 out of 40 across the 4 criteria and the formative performance category to receive a grade of 7. Please see Appendix C, “MLC Overall Grades and Descriptors,” for additional explanation and for the grade boundaries.

8. Final levels of achievement in grades are determined using a best-fit model. Here’s how that works (taken directly from *From Principles into Practice, 2014*, p. 83):

When applying the assessment criteria to student performance, the teacher should determine whether the [rubric’s] first descriptor describes the performance. If the student work exceeds the expectations of the first descriptor, the teacher should

determine whether it is described by the second descriptor. This should continue until the teacher arrives at a descriptor that does not describe the student work; the work will then be described by the previous descriptor. In certain cases, it may appear that the student has not fulfilled all of the descriptors in a lower band but has fulfilled some in a higher band. In those cases, teachers must use their professional judgment in determining the descriptor that best fits the student's performance.

9. Feedback to students should be prompt and constructive. Its purpose is to provide students with ways that they can improve performance on the way to mastering content and skills.
10. Teachers keep a clear and accurate record of all assessments in PowerSchool. For the MYP, formative assessments should reflect criteria that are assessed on the summative assessment that follows them. Both formative and summative assessments will occur within an academic quarter.
11. Progress reports and report cards

Student progress is reported eight times per academic year: four times via progress reports, and four times via report cards. Progress reports are issued in October, December, March, May, while report cards are issued at the end of each academic quarter (November, late January-early February, April, June).

The main difference between these two reports is that the progress reports give details about students' approaches to learning and habits of learning, while report cards give details about academic assessments and progress.

Appendices

Appendix A. MYP and DP Subject Criteria

MYP subject criteria	A	B	C	D
Language & literature	Analyzing	Organizing	Producing text	Using language
Language acquisition	Comprehending spoken and visual text	Comprehending written and visual text	Communicating	Using language
Individuals & societies	Knowing and understanding	Investigating	Communicating	Thinking critically
Sciences	Knowing and understanding	Inquiring and designing	Processing and evaluating	Reflecting on the impacts of science
Mathematics	Knowing and understanding	Investigating patterns	Communicating	Applying mathematics in real-world contexts
Arts	Knowing and understanding	Developing skills	Thinking creatively	Responding
Physical & health education	Knowing and understanding	Planning for performance	Applying and performing	Reflecting and improving performance
Design	Inquiring and analyzing	Developing ideas	Creating the solution	Evaluating
MYP projects	Investigating	Planning	Taking action	Reflecting
Interdisciplinary	Disciplinary grounding	Synthesizing	Communicating	Reflecting

DP subject criteria	A	B	C	D
Group 1: Language and Literature (Literature, Language & Lit)	Understanding and interpretation	Appreciation of writer's choices	Organization and development	Language
Group 2: Language Acquisition (Spanish, Chinese)	Oral productive skills	Interactive and receptive skills	Language: writing	Using language in writing and speaking
Group 3: Individuals and Societies (History, Global Politics)	Knowing and understanding	Application and analysis	Synthesis and evaluation	Use/Application of appropriate skills
Group 3: Individuals and Societies (Business Management)	Knowing and understanding	Application and analysis	Synthesis and evaluation	Communication and methods
Group 4: Experimental Sciences (Chemistry, Biology, Environmental Systems and Societies)	Knowing and understanding	Inquiring and designing	Processing and evaluating	Communication in science
Group 4: Experimental Sciences (SEHS)	Knowing and understanding	Planning for performance	Applying and performing	Reflecting on and improving performance
Group 5: Mathematics (Mathematics, Mathematical Studies)	Knowing and understanding	Technology and inquiry	Communication and reasoning	Problem-solving
Group 6: The Arts (Visual Arts, Music)	Knowing and understanding	Developing skills	Thinking creatively	Responding
Theory of Knowledge	Identifying and understanding	Knower's perspective	Analysis of knowledge issues	Organization of ideas

Appendix B. MLC Commitment to Learning Rubric

At MLC, we believe that it is important that students and parents are provided a *Commitment to Learning* (CTL) score for each course. **This CTL score reports on the development of the skills that help students “learn how to learn,” such as communication, social, self-management, research, and thinking skills.** Reporting on these skills’ development may shed light on a student’s successes or struggles within a course.

COMMITMENT TO LEARNING RUBRIC		
0	<i>The student does not exhibit any of the descriptors.</i>	The student: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Completes assignments. ● Comes to class on time. ● Is organized and prepared. ● Is engaged and focused. ● Exhibits a positive attitude. ● Collaborates and communicates respectfully. ● Uses feedback to improve performance. ● Reflects upon learning and growth. ● Exhibits academic honesty. ● Demonstrates sensitivity to and respect for different cultures and beliefs.
1	<i>Rarely, and with intensive teacher intervention:</i>	
2	<i>Infrequently, and with regular teacher intervention:</i>	
3	<i>Occasionally, and with some teacher intervention:</i>	
4	<i>Generally, and with some teacher intervention:</i>	
5	<i>Usually, and with minimal teacher intervention:</i>	
6	<i>Usually, and without teacher intervention:</i>	
7	<i>Consistently, and without teacher intervention:</i>	

Appendix C. MLC Final Grades and Descriptors

In order to better support students as they develop effective work habits and reflective practices, an additional category for assessment, called “Formative Performance,” has been added to MLC assessment.

This category reflects students’ scores on selected formative assessments, so that students, parents, and teachers get a better “snapshot” of a student’s academic performance in their courses. The subject criteria (Criteria A-D) for courses have not changed at all.

Similar to the criteria in each subject, formative performance will have a maximum achievement level of 8, and the “formative performance” score will be included in a student’s academic grades in the following way in each course:

Criterion A	Summative scores (8 pt. rubric)
Criterion B	Summative scores (8 pt. rubric)
Criterion C	Summative scores (8 pt. rubric)
Criterion D	Summative scores (8 pt. rubric)
Formative Performance	Best fit of selected formative work (8 pt.)
Total	40 points

Then, overall academic grades are determined based on the following chart:

FINAL GRADE BOUNDARIES		
(To determine an overall grade in a given course: add up a student’s scores in each of the four criteria and the formative performance category, and find that total in the “Boundary Guidelines” column in this chart. Then, look to the left (the “Grade” column) to see the overall course grade.)		
Grade (GPA)	Boundary Guidelines	Descriptor
1 (F)	1-6	Produces work of very limited quality. Conveys many significant misunderstandings or lacks understanding of most concepts and contexts. Very rarely demonstrates critical or creative thinking around course content and skills. Very inflexible in the use of knowledge and skills.
2 (F)	7-11	Produces work of limited quality. Expresses misunderstandings or significant gaps in understanding for many concepts and contexts. Infrequently demonstrates critical or creative thinking around course content and skills. Generally inflexible in the use and application of knowledge and skills.
3 (D)	12-17	Produces work of acceptable quality. Communicates basic understanding of many concepts and contexts, with occasional significant misunderstandings or gaps. Begins to demonstrate some basic critical and creative thinking around course content and skills. Is often inflexible in the use of knowledge and skills, requiring support even in familiar classroom situations.
4 (C)	18-23	Produces good-quality work. Communicates basic understanding of most concepts and contexts with few misunderstandings and minor gaps. Often demonstrates basic critical and creative thinking around course content and skills. Uses knowledge and skills with some flexibility in familiar classroom situations, but requires support in unfamiliar situations.
5 (B+/B)	24-29	Produces generally high-quality work. Communicates secure understanding of concepts and contexts. Demonstrates critical and creative thinking, sometimes with sophistication, around course content and skills. Uses knowledge and skills in familiar classroom and real-world situations and, with support, in some unfamiliar real-world situations.
6 (A-)	30-34	Produces high-quality, occasionally innovative work. Communicates extensive understanding of concepts and contexts. Demonstrates critical and creative thinking, frequently with sophistication, around course content and skills. Uses knowledge and skills in familiar and unfamiliar classroom and real-world situations, often with independence.
7 (A+/A)	35-40	Produces high-quality, frequently innovative work. Communicates comprehensive, nuanced understanding of concepts and contexts. Consistently demonstrates sophisticated critical and creative thinking around course content and skills. Frequently transfers knowledge and skills with independence and expertise in a variety of complex classroom and real-world situations.

Appendix D. Frequently Asked Questions

1. What do MYP and DP stand for?

MYP: Middle Years Programme (the International Baccalaureate's program for students aged 11-16, based on the principles of holistic learning, intercultural awareness, communication, and concept-based teaching and learning)

DP: Diploma Programme (the International Baccalaureate's rigorous, two-year college preparation course of study for 16-18 year olds)

2. What are criteria?

Criteria are the "categories" of assessment for students. They are the broad skill areas that are important in each subject. Each MYP and DP subject has unique criteria, and student work is assessed in one or more of these "categories". See Appendix A for the full list of MYP and DP criteria.

3. Why do you use criteria instead of categories like tests, quizzes, class participation, etc.?

We use criteria because we believe that it leads to more consistent scoring across all years of the MYP. Students see the same criteria in each subject over the course of five years, and every teacher in a given subject scores student work using the same criteria. This gives students, their parents, and their teachers a more consistent picture of their achievement over time.

Though many people are used to averages and percentages for grading – they are easy to compute and present – these can lead to grades that don't necessarily reflect what a student can really do in a given subject. If a teacher includes class participation or extra credit, then their students' grades are not really a reflection of skill and academic achievement. We want student scores at MLC to be as reliable and consistent as they can be, which is why we are enthusiastic about the criteria we use to score student work.

4. What is formative assessment?

Formative assessment is "assessment *for* learning." Put simply, formative assessment is what students, parents, and teachers use to check student progress toward course learning objectives and criteria.

A quick analogy: a coach (sports, music, acting, etc.) uses practice sessions or lessons or rehearsals to introduce new skills, to let their players or pupils practice those skills, and to provide valuable feedback to players/pupils about how they are doing. In the same way, MLC teachers provide formative assessments to their students so that they can learn and practice. It

is very important that students complete their formative work, so that they can practice and get feedback on how they are doing.

When students don't practice well or neglect practice, their performance on "game day" or at the concert or opening night is not as good as it could have been. As a way to build both skills and habits that lead to success, formative assessment is a really important part of learning at MLC.

5. What is summative assessment?

Summative assessment is "assessment of learning." Put simply, summative assessment is the measure we use to see whether students met unit or course objectives. It happens at the end of a period of learning or unit of study, and it is the same as "game day" or the performance (recital, concert, etc.) for which people put in hours and hours of preparation. "Game day" performances (summative assessments at MLC) are used to judge whether objectives and expectations have been met after a period of teaching and learning.

6. Can students hand in work whenever they want to?

No. It is not in the students' best interests to have unlimited time in which to hand in late work. First, that can cause a "snowball effect" of work that piles up on a student, and second, it is in direct conflict with developing the skills of time management and organization.

7. Where can I check in on my child's assignments, to see what they are working on in their classes?

There are two ways to check on student work completion:

- a. PowerSchool – scored assignments are listed in PowerSchool. You can check work completion and scores in this software program.
- b. Schoology – teachers use Schoology to post assignment descriptions, due dates, and resources. To see what's coming up for a student, Schoology is a good place to go.

If you have questions about how to access PowerSchool or Schoology, contact your child's school counselor. If you have questions about your child's progress, please contact individual teachers.

8. Whom can I ask about assessment?

For general questions about MYP and how MYP assessment works, contact the MLC Middle Years Programme Coordinator.

For general questions about DP and how DP assessment works, contact the MLC Diploma Programme Coordinator.

For questions about accessing and understanding PowerSchool, contact your child's school counselor.

For questions regarding accessing Schoology or assignments that you see on Schoology, contact your child's individual teachers.

9. Is there still GPA, honor roll, etc.?

Yes. GPA is reported on report cards four times a year, although GPA is not final until June's report card each year.

Honor roll is also reported four times a year, both in middle school and high school.

10. Do colleges know about this kind of grading, and what do they think of it?

Colleges are aware of IB programmes and scoring. We consulted a range of college and universities when we changed our grading practices from averaging to criterion-related assessment. Those schools reported that they appreciate the criteria that we use at MLC, as they help reduce grading inconsistencies from class to class or teacher to teacher.

Remember that colleges and universities review transcripts from schools from all over the US and the world, and that there is no standardized way that those schools calculate grades. Even when a school uses percentages and letter grades, individual teachers in those schools can calculate grades in many different ways. College admissions officers recognize and understand a variety of grading systems.

The IB Diploma Programme is considered one of the best college preparatory programs in the world, and college credits are awarded to students who successfully complete DP courses and score at certain levels on the end-of-course exams.