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CBE Performance Levels Explained: What EE, ME, AE and BE Mean on Kenyan Report Cards

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What EE, ME, AE and BE actually mean on Kenyan CBE report cards, how the eight KJSEA sub-levels work, and how to explain the levels to parents.

On a CBE report card, every learning area is reported with one of four performance levels: **EE** (Exceeding Expectation), **ME** (Meeting Expectation), **AE** (Approaching Expectation) and **BE** (Below Expectation). They describe what a learner can do against what their grade expects — they are not letter grades, and AE and BE are not "fail" marks. For the national Kenya Junior School Education Assessment (KJSEA), KNEC splits each level into two, giving an eight-point scale from EE1 down to BE2.

This guide explains what each level means in practice, how the levels relate to the percentage marks teachers actually record, and how to explain them to parents who grew up on "position 3 out of 40."

Who this guide is for

Teachers recording CBE assessments, heads setting report-card formats, and administrators who field the same parent question every term: "What does AE mean — has my child failed?"

The four levels and what they mean

KNEC's Competency-Based Assessment Framework describes four levels. In plain language:

Level

Code

What it means in practice

Exceeding Expectation

EE

The learner goes beyond what the grade expects — applying the skill in new situations without help.

Meeting Expectation

ME

The learner does what the grade expects, consistently. This is "on track", not average or mediocre.

Approaching Expectation

AE

The learner manages parts of the task but needs more practice or support to be consistent.

Below Expectation

BE

The learner has not yet grasped most of the expected skill and needs targeted help — often revisiting earlier work.

The mindset shift that matters: CBE measures a learner against a standard, not against classmates. A whole class can be at ME and that is a good outcome, not a suspicious one.

The eight sub-levels used in KJSEA

For the national Grade 9 assessment, KNEC splits each level into an upper and lower half, producing eight levels worth 8 down to 1 points:

Level

Points

Reported mark range

EE1

8

90–100%

EE2

7

75–89%

ME1

6

58–74%

ME2

5

41–57%

AE1

4

31–40%

AE2

3

21–30%

BE1

2

11–20%

BE2

1

0–10%

An honesty note on the percentages: the eight levels and points come from KNEC's KJSEA reporting; the exact mark ranges above are as reported in Kenyan media coverage of the 2025 results rather than a published KNEC table. Treat them as a guide and check the current KNEC circular for your grade before printing cut-offs on official reports.

How marks turn into levels in school reports

For school-based assessment during the term, teachers still mark work out of a percentage — the level is a summary of where that mark falls. Many schools use a straightforward convention such as EE at 80% and above, ME from 60–79%, AE from 40–59% and BE below 40%. That is a common school-level convention, not a universal rule — what matters is that your school picks its cut-offs deliberately, applies them identically across every stream, and prints the legend on the report card so parents can read it.

A worked example: a Grade 6 learner scores 68% in an Integrated Science project task. Under the convention above, the report shows **ME — Meeting Expectation**, with a comment explaining the specific strength and next step. The mark stays in the teacher's record; the level is what the parent sees.

Explaining the levels to parents

Three sentences cover most parent meetings:

- "The report shows what your child can do, not where they rank in class."
- "ME means they are doing exactly what a child at this grade should do — that is the goal, not the middle."
- "AE and BE mean 'needs support', not 'failed' — the comment next to the level says what we are doing about it."

Sending the level legend home with the first report card of the year saves the same conversation being repeated thirty times.

Common mistakes schools make with performance levels

- **Printing a mark with no level, or a level with no comment.** CBE reports work because level + comment together tell the story.
- **Different cut-offs per teacher or per stream.** If Grade 7 East calls 75% an EE and Grade 7 West calls it an ME, the report cards contradict each other and parents notice.
- **Treating AE/BE as punishable "fail" grades.** They flag where to direct support — Kenya's own education leadership has stressed that the levels describe where a learner is, not whether they passed.

- **Ranking learners anyway.** Publishing a position list alongside levels quietly reintroduces the comparison CBE is designed to replace.
- **Copying KJSEA's eight sub-levels into a school report card without checking they apply.** The eight-level scale is how the national assessment reports; most school-level report cards use the four levels.

A one-term checklist for consistent levels

- Agree the school's mark-to-level cut-offs in a staff meeting and write them down
- Print the four-level legend on every report card
- Moderate a sample of marked work across streams at least once a term
- Pair every level with a specific comment, not "Good" or "Improve"
- Send the legend to parents with the first report of the year

Where Mwalimu Ease fits

Mwalimu Ease supports both CBC and 8-4-4 formats. Teachers enter the raw marks once; report cards then apply the school's level bands automatically and print with the legend, class-teacher comments and your school branding, so every stream reports identically. The assessment analytics also classify each class's results into EE/ME/AE/BE bands per paper, which makes it easy to spot that a whole stream is sitting at AE in one strand before parents' day. See how the full workflow works in our guides to calculating CBE assessment scores and preparing CBE report cards.

Frequently asked questions

Is BE a fail grade?

No. CBE levels describe where a learner is against expectations; BE means the learner needs targeted support to get there. KNEC has explicitly pushed back on describing the lower levels as failure.

What is the difference between ME1 and ME2?

Both mean the learner is meeting expectations. ME1 is the upper half of the band and ME2 the lower half — the split is used in KJSEA reporting, not usually on school report cards.

Do the four levels apply to KCSE?

No. KCSE under 8-4-4 continues to use the familiar letter-grade system (A to E) with mean grades. The EE/ME/AE/BE levels belong to CBC/CBE school assessment and national assessments like KJSEA.

Who sets the mark ranges for each level?

For national assessments, KNEC. For school-based reports, your school sets its own cut-offs within the current guidance — the requirement is consistency across the whole school, not one national percentage table.

Should report cards show the percentage mark as well as the level?

Practices differ. Many schools keep the raw mark in internal records and broadsheets but show only the level and comment on the parent-facing card. Whichever you choose, apply it uniformly.

Sources: KNEC Competency-Based Assessment Framework and KJSEA reporting (knec.ac.ke); Ministry of Education (education.go.ke); KNEC clarification of KJSEA grading as reported by The Star (December 2025). Mark ranges shown are as reported publicly — confirm current KNEC guidance for your grade. Last reviewed 15 November 2026.

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