

Standards-Based Grading FAQ for Families

Q: What is Standards-Based Grading? Why are we implementing standards-based grading? What was wrong with the old system?

A: We are implementing standards-based grading to communicate the most accurate student achievement data to students and families. SBG is a way to communicate student progress using specific learning standards. It separates assignments that help students practice their learning from tasks that assess a student's level of mastery. The focus of SBG is based solely on mastery of the content.

To illustrate the lack of clarity in a traditional grading system, consider three different students, all of whom earned a 75% in their traditionally graded science class.

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
Homework: 100% Tests & Labs: 50%	Homework: 50% Tests & Labs: 100%	Homework: 75% Tests & Labs: 75%
Overall Grade: 75%	Overall Grade: 75%	Overall Grade: 75%

While these three students all have identical grades, their understandings of science are likely quite different. Standards-based grading aims to clear up the uncertainty about what grades mean. The goal is to do all we can to make sure that a grade is the best representation of what a student actually knows in a given content area.

Q: What if my student has always gotten A's? How will this affect them?

A: Our purpose for implementing SBG is to communicate the most accurate student achievement data to students and families. In the past, traditional grades may have included extra credit, practice work, participation and student behavior in the final grade. With SBG, a student's grade reflects only academic achievement.

Your student will benefit by having more ownership over his or her grades than ever before. This ownership can be seen in three ways:

1. Your student can focus on growth in the essential skills and content instead of how many points he or she has earned over the course of a marking period.
2. Your student will have a clear list of standards and performance indicators detailing exactly what he or she needs to master in the course.
3. Your student can now retake assessments to show growth.

Q: Does homework count as part of the grade?

A: Most homework will not count towards the mastery of standards because it is often assigned as practice. Students should feel free to take academic risks and grow from their mistakes; therefore, practice is not a good measure of student achievement. However, completion and timeliness will be reported in the "Work Habits" section of your student's report card. The distinction is best understood as one between practice assignments and performance assignments. Some examples of performance assignments might include: lab write-ups, essays, or projects. Some examples of practice assignments might include: quick pre-writes, worksheets, note-taking, and practice problems.

Q: My student is struggling to hit the highest marks in class. It seems that to earn *Exceeding* on a standard, he or she has to do something that wasn't even taught. Is this true?

A: No, earning high marks should be as clear as possible for students and families. Establishing clear guidelines for how to achieve *Exceeding*, *Meeting*, *Approaching*, or *Beginning* is a prominent focus in our classrooms. Teachers and students are developing rubrics to help identify exactly what students need to do to

achieve the different marks on any given standard. If you have questions about exactly what it takes to achieve a high mark, please contact your student's teacher.

Q: What are the major differences to expect with this new grading system?

A: See chart below

	From Traditional...	Towards Standards-Based Grading
Reporting	<p>This system has 40 points of passing and 60 points of failure. A = 90–100% B = 80–89% C = 70–79% D = 60–69% F = Below 60%</p>	<p>This system has 4 Levels of Proficiency to communicate how well a student demonstrates mastery of a standard. This is not based on completion of a task; it's based on understanding and mastery of a skill or concept. EX = Exceeding, ME = Meeting, AP = Approaching, BE = Beginning, N = No Evidence</p> <p>*Students are not always expected to immediately exceed or meet the standard when a new concept or skill is being introduced.</p>
Categories and Weighting	<p>Major Grades Minor Grades</p>	<p>Standards and Performance Indicators - college and career readiness skills Work Habits - academic and social behaviors that may impact academic growth, but do not influence the overall course grade calculation.</p>
Instructional Practices	1. A letter grade after an assessment or test.	1. Proficiency levels for each skill that has been assessed.
	2. Criteria for success may be unclear.	2. Criteria and targets are made available to students ahead of time in the form of rubrics.
	3. Use an uncertain mix of assessment, achievement, effort, and behavior to determine the final grade. May use late penalties and extra credit.	3. Separates achievement from effort/behavior. No academic penalties or extra credit will be given. Late work will be reflected in the work habits feedback, but this does not influence the overall course grade calculation.
	4. Everything goes in the grade book – regardless of purpose.	4. Only selected assessments (tests, quizzes, projects, etc.) are used for grading purposes.
	5. Assessments record the average – not the best – work.	5. Emphasize the most recent evidence of learning when grading.
	6. Students have one chance to demonstrate their learning on major grades.	7. Students have the opportunity to show growth through reteaching and reassessment.

Adapted from O'Connor K (2002). *How to Grade for Learning: Linking grades to standards (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.