

Standards-Based Grading

What is standards-based grading?

Standards-based grading measures your student's mastery of the essential standards for a class, or how well your student understands the material in class. At the beginning of every unit, the teacher will break down the standards for the unit into smaller objectives and criteria using a detailed rubric. (This will be provided in your child's interactive notebook). During the unit, the student is assessed to see if they truly know the material using a variety of assessments, such as traditional pencil-and-paper tests, projects, discussions, or reports. The student's grade will be based on the mastery of the essential standards.

The goal of this approach is to provide the teacher, student, and parent as accurate a picture as possible of the student's learning and to encourage a dialogue about how the student can master the material for the class. In particular, because learning is a process that takes place over time, each assessment will provide feedback for the student about what to focus on next, and the student will be allowed to retake assessments. If the new assessments shows a higher level of mastery, that new score replaces the old one.

How is standards-based grading different from traditional grading?

In the traditional 100-point grading system, a student's grades are typically based on all of the work assigned in class, including class work, homework, projects, quizzes, and tests. These scores are often arranged in the grade book based on the type of assignment rather than on the essential standards for the class. The grade may also include points for non-academic factors, such as participation, effort, or attitude.

Standards-based grading does not separate out tests, homework, or projects. All of the work a student does is used to assess the student's mastery of the essential standards. A student's scores from their work are tracked by the essential standards, which gives the teacher, student, and parent a very detailed picture of which standards a student has mastered. Non-academic factors like behavior, attitude, and attendance are not included in this grade and reported in a different manner.

Why are the 7th grade science teachers changing to standards-based grading?

The goal of this change is to report grades that are accurate, consistent, meaningful, and supportive of learning, and the change to standards-based grading is an effort to reach that goal. Here is how standards-based grading addresses each of those four criteria.

Accurate: By basing a student's grade on solely academic factors, the teacher creates a clear picture of what the student has learned without the influence of other factors. These other factors, such as effort and attitude, are still essential, but are not part of the student's academic grade and are communicated separately.

Consistent: For each unit, the teacher will provide a rubric that describes exactly what the student will need to master. Using these rubrics establishes clear expectations for mastery up front and applies them consistently throughout the unit and trimester.

Meaningful: A meaningful grade is one that clearly communicates what learning has taken place. In a standards based classroom, scores are recorded by the essential standards rather than by type, such as tests or homework, making it easier to identify areas of strength and to address areas of concern for each student.

Supportive of Learning: Standards-based grading supports learning by focusing on the material that has or has not been learned rather than on accumulating points to reach a certain total. The reassessment policy also supports student learning by allowing new levels of learning to replace old when a student shows improvement on an assessment.

What do the scores on the 4.0 scale mean?

The scores on the 4.0 scale each have a very specific meaning. They are:

4.0: (EXCEEDS) The student demonstrates an in-depth understanding of the material by completing advanced applications of the material.

3.0: (MASTERS) The student understands the targeted knowledge and skills for the class.

2.0: (APPROACHING) The student understands the foundational material that supports the targeted learning, but is still working to master the material for the class.

1.0: (BEGINNING) The student is able to demonstrate an understanding of the foundational material for the class with help from the teacher, but still struggles when working independently.

0.0: Even with assistance from the teacher, the student shows no understanding of the material.

The intermediate scores of 0.5, 1.5, 2.5, and 3.5 are used to show that a student has shown partial mastery of the next level of learning. In particular, a score of 0.5 shows that a student has mastered some but not all of the foundational 2.0 material,

a score of 1.5 shows that a student has mastered all of the foundational material with help but only some of it without help, and a score of 2.5 shows that a student has mastered all of the foundational material at the 2.0 level but has only shown partial mastery of the complex, targeted learning at the 3.0 level.

What is the grading scale for standards-based grading?

The 4.0 scale will be converted to a letter grade using the grading scale shown below.

A: 3.75 – 4.00	B-: 2.75 – 2.99	D+: 1.50 – 1.74
A-: 3.50 – 3.74	C+: 2.50 – 2.74	D: 1.25 – 1.49
B+: 3.25 – 3.49	C: 2.00 – 2.49	D-: 1.00 – 1.24
B: 3.00 – 3.24	C-: 1.75 – 1.99	F: 0.00 – 0.99

This conversion scale sets clear expectations for student learning. In order to receive credit for a class, a student must, with help, show an understanding all of the foundational skills taught in science class. The C range shows that the student understands all of the foundational skills without help, and the B range requires a student to master all of the targeted knowledge in the class. Finally, to receive an A- or A, the student must show an in-depth, advanced understanding of the material. A passing grade is a score above 60% on the traditional scale, or a score of 1 or more on the standards-based scale.

What does standards-based grading look like in PowerSchool?

PowerSchool has certain limitations, and teachers have to work within those limitations. **When you check your student's grades in PowerSchool, you will NOT see a letter grade and a percent for each assignment or the class.** You will see each standard in place of individual assignments with a proficiency score showing the student's progress towards each standard.

How will my student be assessed?

Your student's learning will be assessed using a variety of formative and summative assessments. These tools will include formal assessments such as traditional paper-and-pencil tests, projects, written papers, lab reports, or verbal assessments, but they may also include informal assessments such as classroom discussions or teacher observations. Essentially, everything that a student does in a standards-based class provides the teacher with evidence of the student's learning.

What can my student do to raise their grade in a standards-based class?

The goal in a standards-based class is on ensuring that students master the essential standards for the class, so any efforts to raise your student's grade will have the same goal. Your student will have the opportunity to reassess themselves on the standards they did not master. Student's will be allowed to re-take an assessment once after the initial assessment.

What does my student need to do in order to be reassessed?

After completing a summative assessment in a standards-based class, students who don't reach mastery can ask for a reassessment using the process described below.

The reassessment will take place on the following Friday after their application has been completed in full and has a parent's signature. All applications are due 2 days prior to the reassessment.

1. The student gets a copy of the Reassessment Agreement Application from the teacher and determines which standards the student will be reassessed on, and sets the date and time of the reassessment.
2. The student must complete practice activities that would help with relearning the material. Activities selected must have evidence that it has been completed and attached to the application.

The reassessment agreement supports your student's learning by:

- Identifying what areas of the standard the student needs more help with.
- Ensuring that re-learning takes place before the reassessment.
- Identifying the specific steps the student must complete to be reassessed.
- Clarifying the reassessment process for both the student and the teacher.

If you have any additional questions about the reassessment process, please contact your student's teacher.

Why should my student do the homework assigned in class if it isn't included in the grade?

Many students feel that in a standards-based class they don't have to worry about anything except their final unit test. This is incorrect. ***It is important for students to understand that they are being assessed every day by their teachers, and that everything they do in class lets their teacher assess their knowledge and helps prepare the students for the assessments.*** Just as an NFL team would never expect to win the Superbowl without hours upon hours of practicing, ***students need the practice homework provides to prepare them for success.***

Student work is also analyzed by teachers to determine growth and improvement towards mastery of a specific skill or content. The teacher has the responsibility of taking all the work a student does into account when assigning a grade for the trimester. So, ***if a student chooses to not do an assignment, not only are they missing an opportunity to practice a skill, they also miss an opportunity to display mastery of a standard to their teacher.***

Why doesn't my student have a grade yet?

Because standards-based grading focuses on assessments, your student's overall class grade may not be updated as frequently as it was when every assignment impacted the grade. This shift is especially noticeable at the beginning of the trimester when it may take a few weeks for the class to complete the first assessment and for your student to be given a score for that standard. However, while the overall grade may not change as frequently, most homework and in-class assignments will be completed and graded in their interactive notebook. Parents will be encouraged to check their student's notebook often to view their progress. By doing so, you can see the progression of your student's understanding of the standards. Please contact your student's teacher at any time if you have questions about your student's overall progress towards mastery.

Are non-academic factors, such as effort, attitude, participation, and behavior part of the class grade?

Your student's citizenship grade, as indicated in the student handbook, will reflect the non-academic factors in the classroom such as the student's behavior, attitude, participation, and effort. This rating does not impact the academic achievement grade a student accomplishes.

If we change school districts, how will my student's grade be transferred if the new district does not use standards-based grading?

When a student transfers to a new district, the transfer grade is determined by the student's average of the scores for all the standards. For example, if the student currently has an average of 3.00 on the standards-based scale, the current letter grade is a B, so the transfer grade is sent as an B.

How can I get more information about my student's grade or about standards-based grading?

If you have questions or concerns about your student's grade in class or if you would like more information on standards-based grading, please contact your student's science teacher.