

Standard Based Grading Questions & Answers

1. What is Standards Based Grading?

Standards based grading measures the mastery of the learning objectives, or how well students understand the material in class. It is based on a specific set of standards that students need to meet for each grade/content level. Marks are not a comparison of one student to another, but rather a way to measure how well students are doing on grade-level/course level standards. A standards based approach allows parents and students to understand more clearly what is expected of students and how to help them be successful in their educational program.

2. What is the goal of Standards Based Grading?

The primary goal of standards based grading is to improve student achievement by focusing instruction and the alignment of curriculum with the essential learning outcomes. Standards based grading and reporting will provide better communication to students, parents, teachers and administrators on what each student knows and is able to do according to the identified standards and separately assess the influence of positive and consistent work habits on student learning.

3. How does Standards Based Grading differ from traditional letter grades?

Standards based grading informs us what students have actually learned and know. Standards based grading measures students' knowledge of grade level content over time by reporting the most recent, consistent level of performance. So, a student might struggle in the beginning of a grading period with new content, but then learn and demonstrate proficient performance by the end of the grading period. In traditional grading, the student's performance for the whole grading period would be averaged and early quiz scores that were low would be averaged together with proficient performance later in the course resulting in a lower grade. In standards based grading, a student who reaches proficiency would be reported proficient and the grade would reflect current performance level.

4. Why change what we have been doing for years?

Traditional grading often measures many different factors such as homework, extra credit, attendance, behavior, etc... and sometimes compares how well students do to their classmates. Standards based grading measures how well an individual student is doing in relation to each grade level standard/skill. Standards based grading gives students and

parents/guardians specific information on what the student does know and can do. It eliminates many of the factors that can distort a traditional grade.

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

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

While these three students all have identical grades, their understandings of science are likely quite different. Student 1 may have the most questionable understanding of class concepts, as he only averages a 50% on major assessments. Student 2 might very well be quite a gifted scientist, but it seems she's not very good at turning in homework. Student 3 is likely legitimately struggling to master the content, as his consistency suggests this grade is a good representation of what he actually understands.

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 the content, and not a measure of anything else.

5. What is the effect on the GPA?

Standards based grading will have no effect on GPA. At the middle school level for 2015-2016, the 4.0 scale will be converted to a letter grade which is used to determine GPA. The GPA will be used to determine eligibility for MSHSAA activities and to determine honor roll students. Beginning with the 2016-2017 school year, the high school will use the same conversion scale as the middle school. Elementary students will not receive any letter grades.

6. What student evidence is used to determine mastery of the standard?

Summative assessments will be used to determine mastery. An assessment of learning does not necessarily have to be a paper/pencil test. It may be a presentation, oral questioning, demonstration, performance task, product, etc. The assessment will be any evidence that shows the student has achieved mastery of a particular standard. Students can retest as many times as they need to, to show they know the concept or skill. The goal is for all students to learn the material.

The information that provides the most accurate depiction of students' learning is the most current information. If students demonstrate that past assessment information no

longer accurately reflects their learning, that information must be dropped and replaced by the new information.

7. Why does homework not count in the grade?

Homework should be used to practice a skill. Practice can't be a good measure of what we have already learned, because we engage in practice to learn it in the first place.

To illustrate this, think of a math class where a series of problems have been given as homework after the day's lesson is taught. The teacher assigns the problems so students can practice this new skill. The teacher then uses the results of the homework to determine what additional instruction is necessary. It is not fair to make how well a student does on these problems part of their permanent grade when more instruction may be needed for the student to fully understand.

If we think in terms of an athletic competition, practice is never used as part of the final score in an actual game.

8. What about extra credit?

Extra credit does not measure learning. In a standards based system, students are actually able to demonstrate their learning in many different ways and timeframes. In a traditional system in which points determine everything, extra credit and extra points will influence a grade and not reflect any additional learning. For instance, a student that has a 2.0 on a specific learning goal may have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning at the 3.0 level. However, in a traditional system in which extra points are simply added in to the overall grade, extra points can be earned regardless of whether or not learning may have occurred.

9. What is the timeline for all buildings to be doing Standards Based Grading and using the conversion scale?

During the 2015-2016 school year, all students in grades K-12 will be assessed on each Essential Learning Outcome (standards). Mastery of the ELOs will be marked at each grading interval using a three point scale at the elementary and high school levels. Letter grades will also be given at the high school level. The middle school will mark each ELO using the four point scale and will then convert those scores to a letter grade in order to determine eligibility for MSHSAA activities and honor roll.

During the 2016-2017 school year, all students in grades K-12 will be assessed on each Essential Learning Outcome (standards). Mastery of the ELOs will be marked at each grading interval using a three point scale at the elementary and a four point scale at the

high school and middle school levels. A conversion scale to determine a letter grade at the end of the grading period will be used at the middle school and high school levels.

10. What research has the district used in developing standards bases assessment and grading?

The district has utilized research from the following experts in the field: Dr. Robert Marzano, Ken O'Connor, Jay McTighe, Rick Wormeli, Thomas Guskey, Douglas Reeves and Ricky Stiggins.

GLOSSARY OF STANDARDS BASED GRADING TERMS

Assessment:	Gathering and interpreting information about student achievement using a variety of tools.
Benchmark Assessment:	An assessment that measures a student's achievement level on all standards in a course that will be repeated periodically to check for improvement.
Common Assessment:	The same assessment that is given and graded by common grade level/subject classrooms at about the same time to collect data.
Essential Learning Outcomes:	Statements that define what students should know, understand and be able to do for each course. They are aligned to the Missouri Learning Standards.
Formative Assessment:	Periodic assessment tool for learning that is used to adjust instruction for individual students or a whole class.
Grade:	A simple, clear and concrete summary representation of student achievement based on what a student knows at the end of a period. The number (or letter) reported at the end of a period of time as a summary statement of student performance.
Mastery:	Demonstration of student performance against standard criteria at a pre-established level.

Score: To mark, evaluate, or place a value on a single product as compared to a standard or objective. The number (or letter) “score” given to any student test or performance.

Standards: See Essential Learning Outcomes

Standards Based Grading: Achievement level based on mastery of essential learning outcomes- a grading system where scores denote progress toward the understanding of a specific standard.

Summative Assessment: An evaluation tool designed to show information about a student’s achievement at the end of a period of instruction.