

Standards-Based Grading

A Teacher's View

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Why did I change? Why would anyone change?

- Pressure from paperwork, accountability, parents, class size
- Underachieving and overachieving students
- Parent communication
- There has to be a better way...

Essential Questions

- How does standards-based grading (SBG) look on a practical level?
- How can a teacher train students and parents to use and understand SBG?
- How can a teacher create a documentation system for SBG?
- How can you take what you have learned in the past two days and apply it?

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- What ideas and strategies are uppermost in your mind as this conference ends?
 - What unanswered questions do you have?
 - What concerns you most about implementing changes in the way you grade or administer teachers as they grade?




If you could build an ideal grading system, what characteristics would it have?

- Efficient for teacher and student
- Understandable to all stakeholders
- Focused on learning objectives
- Supports best practices of instruction
- Permanent grade record reflects actual student learning
- Promotes desired student behaviors, such as responsibility and initiative

What do I mean by Standards-Based Grading?

Some definitions (mine):

“Traditional” Grading: based on a combination of points for various types of evidence. The points are combined by some arithmetic process (average) to create a composite single score that is then converted to a letter grade. Low scores may be dropped but are not often replaced. Revision of substandard work is not common.



Standards-Based Grading: *evidence is gathered based on learning objectives, not evidence types. Evidence is categorized on its quality as opposed to completion, effort or participation. Revision of substandard work is common and new evidence can easily replace old evidence.*

Reflect

- Where are you now in terms of your grading policies?
- What elements of grading need to be opened for discussion in your school or district?
- What have you learned in the past two days that will help you take the next steps?

How does standards-based grading look on a practical level?

What stays the same?

- Instructional Strategies
- Curriculum
- Daily routine
- Types of assessments used

What changes?

- Time needed to explain how grading works
- Curriculum
- Using data to plan lessons
- Parent interaction
- Student interaction
- Front loading
- Number of grades decreases
- Holistic scoring



In order to start the year off right, what do I need to do?

- Implement changes you can really accomplish
- Communicate with principal and counselors
- Don't over-plan in the first few weeks
- Be able to communicate the whys behind your changes effectively
- Clear written policies to send home
- Be comfortable with holistic scoring



What will my students be concerned about?

- Students with poor academic backgrounds will lack confidence to redo their work
- Students who are good at “playing school” will want to continue doing so
- Students will wonder if they can trust you to do what you say you’ll do



How to act on student concerns

- You may need to reach out individually to students who need encouragement to pull them into the process
- Assure the kids who “play school” that they will have chances to get the grade they want
- Be consistent and admit when you make mistakes or when things don’t work, and fix them!
- Encourage honest and open feedback

What will parents be concerned about?

- They will have questions about how to interpret reports and online grade books
- They will want to know how to monitor their child's work and how to catch problems before they get out of hand
- Parents of poor test takers will be concerned about the lack of points for effort
- They will be concerned if their child's grade is much different than usual

How to act on parent concerns

- It helps parents when their children understand what is going on and can explain it at home
- Make yourself as available as you can and expect meetings with individual parents
- Provide multiple types of assessment and be flexible
- Provide opportunities to edit, revise, retest and replace old scores with new ones
- Be willing to admit if you make a mistake!



Questions that you need to be able to answer...

- How is your grading policy fair?
- If you don't grade homework, how will that teach responsibility?
- Why don't you give credit for trying?
- What about extra credit?
- Why is your class so hard?
- Why can't you grade like everyone else?
- What if I'm not a good test taker?



Some suggestions for training students

- Class discussion – start early and often with discussions about quality, meta-cognitive strategies and learning goals
- Writing – have students write about their experience as learners to create a safe environment
- Skepticism – it needs to be okay to question what you are doing in appropriate ways

More suggestions

- Ownership - ask students to go home and train their parents and bring feedback to school
- Assessing the system - a “quiz” on grading policies – this suggestion came from a parent meeting
- Use exemplars to provide models of what you want and simple, clear rubrics to score student work
- Keep talking about it until they tell you to stop

What about my colleagues?

- Within your department or team, you may need to make some accommodation to be consistent, which is easier if you make gradual changes
- What we believe about grading is deeply held – expect some defensive responses
- Team meetings and parent conferences will provide openings to challenge your colleagues to think – use them!

How can ANY teacher transition to SBG?

“Change has considerable psychological impact on the human mind. *To the fearful it is threatening* because it means that things may get worse. *To the hopeful it is encouraging* because things may get better. *To the confident it is inspiring* because the challenge exists to make things better. Obviously, then, one’s character and frame of mind determine how readily he brings about change and how he reacts to change that is imposed on him”

– *King Whitney, Jr.*

A note about holistic scoring...

- Some form of holistic scoring is used in just about every model of SBG
- Look to your state tests (amazing!) for some great rubrics to use when getting started
- If you have never used holistic scoring or used it rarely, consider spending a year using rubrics more extensively in a point-based system
- Consider using one basic rubric for all similar tasks
- Students can help generate rubrics also

A sample rubric from math

- 4 (P)– work is essentially correct. Any errors are minor and do not relate to the tested benchmark
- 3 (PP+)– work has one significant error or omission. Student does not need additional instruction, but additional practice.
- 2 (PP) – work has some correct elements, but student requires more instruction to raise score.
- 1 (NP) – work was submitted but does not show evidence of understanding.
- 0 (NP) – work not submitted

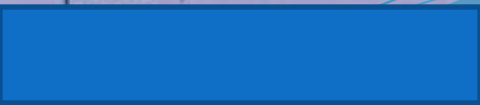


Documentation

- Start with whatever tools you use to record grades, especially if a particular tool or program is required in your district
- Keep your expectations of these tools low
- If your school does not have good standards based grade book tools, be prepared to invest extra time keeping your grades up

A sample of my paper grade book

- I keep a paper grade book for a few reasons
- It is efficient
- It is formatted exactly as I want it to be
- I can put a summary of this detail in my digital grade book for students and parents
- It just works for me and for my students



KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

- Benchmark: each benchmark is numbered for reference
- Type: CORE + benchmarks need proficient scores whenever tested, CORE and SCNDRY (Secondary) benchmarks need only one proficient score
- Description: The name of the benchmark - see your benchmark list for details
- Formative Assessments: These assessments are while learning is still going on and do not count as much as a summative assessment
- Summative Assessments: These assessments determine final scores, and for a CORE or SECONDARY benchmark, one proficient score is enough!

Benchmark	Type	Description	Formative Assessments			Summative Asse		
1	CORE+ CORE SCNDRY	simplify expressions with exponents and roots (scientific notation)	Quiz 1 Jan 22 abs NS			Quiz 2 Feb 3 PP	Quiz 3 Feb 7 PP+	
2	CORE+ CORE SCNDRY	apply unit conversions	Quiz 1 Jan 22 abs NS	Tale + Scale P		Quiz 3 Feb 10 P	Quiz 3 Feb 10 P	
3	CORE+ CORE SCNDRY	Apply log properties sec 4.7 to compute + simplify ch. 6	Quiz 4 Mar 3 P					
4	CORE+ CORE SCNDRY	solve problems with exponential growth + decay ch. 5	Quiz 4 Mar 3 P			Quiz 5 Mar 11 PP+	Q2 7 A	
5	CORE+ CORE SCNDRY	Apply exponential growth + decay ch. 5	Quiz 6 Mar 24 PPT			Quiz 7 P		
	CORE+	Solve problems with exponential growth + decay ch. 5				April 15 Quiz 7		

What I record in Infinite Campus

Group: Overall Progress

Assignments:

- Number of proficient objectives
- Progress level (this translates to a grade)

Group: Progress by objective

Assignments:

- Objective Progress
- These scores show the overall score for that objective but I do not enter each piece of evidence

What I record in Infinite Campus

Group: Student skills categories

Gives feedback to parents about student skills

Each question is an assignment and I record yes or no and enter a comment to clarify

I change the due date each time I update the yes/no status

- 1) Is your attendance affecting your grade?
- 2) Do you have a tardy detention?
- 3) Are you a positive influence on others?
- 4) Are you using class time well?
- 5) Are you doing enough practice?
- 6) Do you need extra help?

Letter Grades

Progress Grading Scale

A – all proficient, some advanced

B – all proficient

Pass – at least 50% proficient

Fail – less than 50% proficient (D for one week for eligibility)

Semester Grading Scale

(2nd midterm to the end)

A – all proficient, 50% advanced

B – all proficient

C – core benchmarks proficient

D – 50% proficient

F – less than 50% proficient

Mistakes to avoid

- To be inflexible
- To be unprepared
- To be unwilling to move outside your comfort zone when you ask students to do so
- To be more concerned about being right than doing what is right for your kids
- To continue to grade in ways that are destructive

My next set of challenges

- Changing the classes I teach yet again
- Continuing to improve the assessments I use
- Continuing to improve communication on the front end
- Increasing efficiency
- Not working harder than my students
- Challenging advanced students with meaningful work



Your next set of challenges

- What changes can you make for next year?
- What support will you need to make them?
- What tasks must you complete before then?
- What will you give up to create space to do this?
- What would you need to see in order to consider your work a success?

