

Elementary Frequently Asked Questions for Standards Based Progress Report

What are the purposes of standards-based grading? One purpose of standards-based grading is to align grading with the state standards as measured by consistent and accurate student achievement data and common criteria for grading. Another purpose is to accurately communicate achievement towards these standards to students, parents and educators. The effect of work habits on student learning is reported separately from the academics in a category called Qualities of a Learner.

What is standards-based grading? In a standards-based system, teachers report what students know and are able to do relative to the state standards. The system includes:

- Improvement towards and student achievement of required state standards in all content areas based on various forms of assessments
- A record keeping system that provides teachers with information that allows them to adjust learning practices to meet the needs of students
- A system that encourages student reflection and responsibility

How is standards-based grading different? On a standards based progress report, subject areas are subdivided into big ideas related to standards that students need to learn or master. Each of these standards is assessed. The influence of positive and consistent work habits on student learning is reported separately from the academics in *Qualities of a Learner* (effort, completes homework, follows directions). Our reporting categories correlate to the state standards.

Why are we changing from grades to numbers?

On the progress report, a student's performance is more accurately represented using a 1, 2, 3, or 4, than in traditional grading using an A, B, C, D, F in reporting mastery towards the standards. Traditional grading only provides a score for accuracy and completion of an assignment. These scores are then averaged together. Taking an average does not provide information on whether or not a student has mastered the standards.

Example of Traditional Student Summary Grades

Student	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Average Score	Grade
1	59	69	79	89	99	79.0	C
2	99	89	79	69	59	79.0	C
3	77	80	80	78	80	79.0	C
4	49	49	98	99	100	79.0	C
5	100	99	98	49	49	79.0	C
6	0	98	98	99	100	79.0	C
7	100	99	98	98	0	79.0	C

Grading standards: 90% – 100% = A
80% – 89% = B
70% – 79% = C
60% – 69% = D
– 59% = F

What are the advantages of standards-based grading? State standards are clearly articulated to the students throughout instruction. In addition, parents can see which standards students have mastered and which ones need re-teaching and re-learning.

What are the disadvantages of standards-based grading? It's a change, and change takes time to build understanding for everyone involved. Traditional grading practices are ingrained in the community. All stakeholders will have to go through the change process.

How does a standards-based progress report improve teaching and learning? Knowing where the students are in their progress toward meeting standards is crucial for planning and carrying out classroom instruction. Teachers teach to the needs of their students. The grading system is designed to give teachers more information about the student's progress in meeting the level of proficiency required by each standard. In addition, teachers share the standards with students and parents, helping them to better understand the learning that needs to take place. These will be shared in a parent/teacher grading handbook.

Do we report out on the student's proficiency for the end of the year skills and knowledge, or is the grade based on proficiency for that marking period? The progress report is summative information about the level of proficiency of the learning skills that are taught each marking period. Therefore, the grades throughout the year communicate a student's progress as compared to where we would expect him/her to be at that moment in time. By the end of the year, students are expected to be proficient or advanced for each standard.

How can I check my child's progress? Progress reports will be printed on a quarterly basis for all students K-5. Additionally, parents of students in grades 4-12 can view student class work through Home Access Center. Home Access Center allows parents to view their child's performance using the Internet.

What should I tell my kids that were looking forward to getting a letter grade next year? Research has shown that letter grades do not motivate students to learn. On the contrary, research has found three consistent effects of using - and especially, emphasizing the importance of - letter or number grades:

1. Grades tend to reduce students' interest in the learning itself. One of the most well-researched findings in the field of motivational psychology is that the more people are rewarded for doing something, the more they tend to lose interest in whatever they had to do to get the reward. So, it shouldn't be surprising that when students are told they'll need to know something for a test - or, more generally, that something they're about to do will count for a grade - they are likely to come to view that task (or book or idea) as a chore.
2. Grades tend to reduce students' preference for challenging tasks. Students of all ages who have been led to concentrate on getting a good grade are likely to pick the easiest possible assignment if given a choice. The more pressure to get an A, the less inclination to truly challenge oneself.

3. Grades tend to reduce the quality of students' thinking. Given that students may lose interest in what they're learning as a result of grades, it makes sense that they're also apt to think less deeply. One series of studies, for example, found that students given numerical grades were significantly less creative than those who received qualitative feedback but no grades. The more the task required creative thinking, in fact, the worse the performance of students who knew they were going to be graded.

What if my child earned a 90%? What is that now with no grades? It is not about getting a 90%, it is really a reflection of their growth over the course of the year. A score of a 3 or 4 communicates that the student is progressing towards meeting the standards or they are strongly in place. If the score is a 2 or 1 then the student will require additional help in that content area.

Will there be more than one assessment per marking period?

Yes, there will be multiple assessments given during the marking period to demonstrate evidence towards meeting the standards.

Will my son in middle school have off the same day as his sister in elementary school?

Almost. On all but two conference days that are PK-5 only, 2/3/17 and 5/5/17, PK-8 students in the Brandywine School District will have the same days off in 2016-17 school year and beyond.

How does a 4 compare to an A? It is hard to compare a letter grade to a number score. If your child received all A's in the past you can most likely expect them to receive 3's or 4's in the new reporting system. Learning in many instances is cumulative and understanding grows and develops. It is difficult to compare letter grades with the number system because the marks stand for completely different things. In a standards-based system the score represents what is learned – where the student is in relation to the expectation or standard. In a letter grade system the grade mark indicates how many points a student has accumulated, through assignments, extra credit, participation, etc. In that system, the goal of the student was to gather as many points as possible to get to an A. Now we are looking at where student work is in relation to a standard (performance expectation), rather than an accumulation of points.

To help compare the two, remember that a 4 communicates that the students' understanding of standards are strongly in place for that marking period, while an A demonstrates that the students scored high on assessments and assignments.

Is there research to indicate that standards-based grading significantly increases student achievement?

Students learn the subjects and perform better when instruction and assessment are each implemented with great fidelity. Research on standards-based grading shows that this reporting system can more clearly communicate to teachers and parents their students' progress within standards-based progress and assessments. The works of experts such as Popham, Reeves, Marzano, McTighe, Wiggins, Guskey, Brookhart, and O'Connor support this research. Specific resources are listed at the end of this section.

For Teachers:

Will there be guidance of how to score students for each marking period?

Yes. Rubrics in ELA and mathematics are being created this summer in preparation for next year that will help guide how to determine if a student earned a 1-2-3 or 4 for that marking period.

Will we be given a pacing guide for each marking period?

Yes, there will be pacing guides available identifying student work to be used to help determine a student's marking period score.

How will parents know what we covered each marking period? There is a free text box for each marking period in which the teacher can briefly share what was taught during that time.

For grades 4-5, how will we input grades in eSchool?

You will still input scores as you always have in the past. The rubrics will help determine what score is placed on a student's progress report each marking period.

When can we see the new progress reports? We are sharing the updated progress reports with all staff before the June 13th Inservice Day.

Suggested Readings

Brookhart, S.M. (2011). Starting the Conversation about Grading. *Educational Leadership*, 69(3), 10-14.

Gusky, T.R. (2011). Five Obstacles to Grading Reform. *Educational Leadership*, 69(3), 17-21.

Marzano, R.J. and Heflebower, T. (2011). Grades That Show What Students Know. *Educational Leadership*, 69(3), 34-39.

O'Connor, K. and Wormeli, R. (2011). Reporting Student Learning. *Educational Leadership*, 69(3), 40-44.

Wormeli (2006). [Fair Isn't Always Equal](http://www.isacs.org/misc_files/Annual_Wormeli_Fair%20Equal.pdf).
http://www.isacs.org/misc_files/Annual_Wormeli_Fair%20Equal.pdf

Brookhart, S.M. (2008). How to Give Effective Feedback to Your Students. ASCD, Alexandria, VA.

Marzano, R.J. (2006). Classroom Assessment & Grading That Work. ASCD, Alexandria, VA.

Glossary of Terms

Qualities of a Learner –Process behaviors, study skills and work habits that contribute to learning but are not included in an achievement grade.

Process skills– Criteria of skills that is associated with Qualities of a Learner.

Product – Criteria that is associated with academic performance (evidence from assessments and assignments).

Philosophy of the Progress Report- The primary goal of grade reporting is to communicate with parents and students about the student's progress in demonstrating achievement of the State Standards and effort invested in the learning process for each marking period.